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Official portrait of Peter, about 1713. Later given title as "Peter the Great, Emperor of All the Russias, Father of the Fatherland"

# THE CITY AND THE TSAR

*Peter the Great  
and the Move to the West*

1648-1762

by

HAROLD LAMB



*Garden City, N.Y., 1948*

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## FOREWORD

**T**HIS is the story of a man, a city, and a land.

It was not always the same man. For four generations one man took the place of another, when a son succeeded his father. At times the man was an imbecile, helped by others to appear able to do what was expected of him. And at times daughters or wives of the family contrived to do his work. The family were the Romanovs.

But always the member of the family served, although often challenged or endangered, as the master of the Kremyl—the Kremlin. The greatest member of this family, Peter the son of Alexis, declared himself to be one “who does not have to answer for any of his actions to anyone in the world.” Alone of the family Peter endeavored to change the Kremlin into something else; when he could not manage to do that, he deserted it and built himself a city elsewhere.

For the Kremlin was the citadel of the growing city of Moscow. Fortified by its medieval walls, it dominated Moscow. Rising above the Moskva River, from which the city had its name, and the Kiraigorod, the abode of the nobility and great merchants, it formed the nerve center of the old city of the White Wall. Beyond that wall of whitish stone lay the metropolis inhabited by many different people, within the earthen or Red Wall. And beyond that, the villages and monasteries stretched out into the wooded plain that was the heart of ancient Rus.

In that plain the Volga took its rise, and the headwaters of other rivers, the Dvina and Father Dnieper, that had served

as thoroughfares for people in old time. Over those rivers the Kremlin held dominion, but not always to where they discharged into the outer seas. The dominion had been of Moscow—Muscovy.

East of Moscow, beyond the Volga, lay a new land. It stretched almost interminably along the eastern steppes through the far rivers and the mountain barriers of the Eurasian continent, to the ocean known to the Muscovites as the Eastern Ocean Sea.

Visitors from Europe in the west called this almost unmapped new land Independent Tatar, and they described it as "an empire of settlements." Certainly it lay within Moscow's grasp. Yet, as the Europeans understood, it was not yet an empire under Moscow's control. The settlements were too new and they had stretched thousands of miles away from the city.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, when Alexis had become head of the Romanov family and in consequence Tsar of All of Rus—the only name this embryo empire had—it was by no means certain if he controlled the city itself. He did hold mastery over the boyars and merchants of the inner White City.

Nor was it certain during these four generations if the city would succeed in dominating the vast area of the outer land, or if in the end the hinterland of the continent would reject and so destroy the city.

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# THE CITY AND THE TSAR





## THE TWO GATES OF MUSCOVY

*Great Master*

IN THE YEAR 1648 the long wars had ended in the German states. They had lasted for thirty years. Although peace had been made and signed by the victorious powers, the Thirty Years' War had left Europe bleeding and disillusioned. The German states which had served as battlefields had shrunk within their boundaries and had lost more than two thirds their population. Even the victorious peoples labored to fight hunger and plague in their homelands.

The Thirty Years' War, however, had not affected Muscovy. During that long generation Moscow had become as isolated from western Europe as at the time of the Tatar conquest. Although Muscovy had freed itself from the yoke of the Tatar khans a good while ago, the older grandfathers of the city families could still remember how Tatar horsemen had raided into the suburbs. The yoke of the eastern despots was gone, yet its impress remained on the minds of the Muscovites.

They had had their own Time of Troubles, as they called it, after the death of the fierce and mystical Ivan the Terrible. At the end of that time of fear and disintegration they had chosen a new dynasty to rule in the Kremlin, calling out of seclusion in a monastery a lame sixteen-year-old boy, Michael Romanov by name. Michael Romanov had been a mild man, particularly fond of clocks, and more than ready to be guided by the patriarch, after he had wept and cried out at being called to become Great Prince of Moscow and Tsar of All Rus.

The year 1648 was the marriage year of Alexis, the son of Michael Romanov. Gentler even than his father, Alexis let himself be robed and paraded forth as ancient usage required, for his councilors and boyars and the men who served him to see the light of his eyes. In this, his nineteenth year, he had married the girl of a great family. Maria had been selected for him by his councilors, and the patriarch himself approved of her, because both the young people were religious at heart.

Alexis, young, amiable, relishing a sly jest, liking to have wine poured for him in the company of merry friends, could recite his prayers without prompting and he sang well in a choir, often leading the other singers. Before the throne of the patriarch the young tsar spoke of himself as "I, the sinner . . ."

"A true servitor of the Most High," another patriarch from the east exclaimed, watching the handsome Alexis moving quietly about the altar space of a great cathedral while the choir chanted an age-old *Kyrie eleison*. The stranger was a venerable soul, no less a person than Macarius of Antioch, a visitor from the very gateway of the Holy Land.

When Alexis went forth from a gate of the Kremlin, people ran and crowded together against the armed guards to catch a glimpse of his flushed and smiling face. Monks and merchants, soldiers and peasants on pilgrimage to Holy Mother Moscow of the White Walls—they thought themselves fortunate if he glanced their way. To them, Muscovites and visitors alike, the nineteen-year-old master of the Kremlin was apart from other human beings. In the opinion of the nobles he had become the "born tsar"; to the common folk he had become the *Veliki Gosudar*, the Great Master. He was at the same time their prince and their priest. Did he not appear on that most joyful day, Palm Sunday, with robed clergy swinging censers before him and behind him? That was a happy time, when strangers kissed each other and sang at sight of the waving branches!

Then the most ancient holy pictures of the shrines in the Kremlin were carried forth for the multitude to behold. If the sun shone through the clouds over the Red Place, its rays did not illumine the jeweled hat and collar of Alexis because

he walked under a canopy held by his servitors, the sons of the highest noblemen. Only the grandfathers among the crowd nodded their aged heads and muttered that the Tatar khans of old days had appeared in like fashion under such canopies.

To most of the Muscovites, dwellers in that human warren of makeshift wooden houses, the phenomena around them seemed to be unchanging because nothing had changed within their memories. The processions of the tsars, the ringing of the great bells in the Kremlin towers, the incensing of the priests, the bent heads, the bearded mouths moving in prayer—all this was as it had been in ancient days. A promise and a testimony of divine protection for their troubled lives. Any slave of that multitude could go forward and offer a petition for the eyes of the gentle tsar to read—or at least for the eyes of his serving folk. To change this ancient usage would be sinful, a surrender to Antichrist.

So reasoned the majority of the Muscovites, who guided themselves by precedent and by parables, heedful of the instinct that led them to seek protection. But some thought otherwise.

Foreigners in Moscow on business wondered at the Muscovites on such festival days, when middle-aged folk amused themselves by sitting in swing seats, and boys fought mimic battles with clubs while their fathers got drunk—liquor being allowed them during a feast—and stretched out in the snow or mud before tavern doors. To the foreigners who might remember the splendor of the court of France under the boy king, Louis XIV, the Muscovites appeared to be two centuries behind the times, living still in the faint far dawn of a renaissance. "The only modern thing in Muscovy," an Englishman wrote home, "is the Yam, which is to say the horse-relay post on the roads. And that they got from the Tatars."

On the rare occasions when he left the Kremlin, Alexis passed by some landmarks of progress. The tower over the gate to the Red Place had a giant clock in it, set there by "the English clockmaker" who had served his father. There was also Tsar Kapushka, the enormous bronze cannon cast by an Italian cannon maker for Tsar Ivan the Great. Because Tsar Kapushka had been too heavy to move and too huge to be

fired off without endangering the walls around him, he had been placed on a pedestal for folk to see and admire—the only monument inside the Kremlin.

Still more rarely did Alexis leave Moscow itself, to make the day's journey to the great Troitsko monastery, to hunt afield with his following of boyars and dog tenders, or to visit his rambling summer cottage in Ismailov by the river. He liked particularly to climb to the Hill of the Sparrows where he could look across at the blue and gold domes, the white walls, and the tiny bridges of the city—telling himself in silence that it did resemble Jerusalem.

So when he looked across at his city lying so majestically beneath its canopy of white clouds the young tsar felt in him a joy that was like pain. Was not this the Jerusalem of the years to come? Did not that other hallowed Jerusalem remain lifeless as a chained slave under the hand of the pagan Turks? Its glory had passed, by God's will, to other sanctuaries—to ancient Antioch, to Constantinople, and now, with the loss of Antioch and Constantinople, to his city of Moscow.

For Alexis thought only of simple things. You bowed your head in prayer to make your submission to the power of the everlasting God; you drank wine with friends because by its warmth their merriment increased. . . .

Somewhere near the place of the sun's setting in the west reigned another mighty servitor of God, the Pope of the Catholic faith pent up within the walls of the dark Vatican; somewhere in the heights beneath the sun's rising in the east dwelt still another potentate, the Dalai Lama in his citadel of Tibet. Of these others Alexis was aware because among his thirteen books he had one cosmography that explained the earth and the fortunes of its peoples since the catastrophe of the Flood. Although this chronicle of the earth had been written by a Lithuanian, Alexis could read it. And he read conscientiously, comparing the ideas of the Lithuanian scientist with the *fact* that Jerusalem, by God's will, would be an everlasting city. It never crossed Alexis' mind that he was himself as much a prisoner within the walls of the Kremlin as the popes within the Vatican, or the Dalai Lamas within the cloud-touching Po-tala.



*From mid-seventeenth-century drawing—Olearius*

The Old Russia; blessing before Moscow church on religious festival

It was both simple and comforting to think about Moscow when he reined in his horse on the Hill of the Sparrows. Yet he felt troubled in mind when he rode at foot pace through the mud of Moscow's alleys, in the stench of human dirt.

He felt vaguely that his own sins were responsible for that stench, and for the sick faces that bowed to him—even in the feasts of his *terem* when he shared his own overflowing dishes with his boyars, Alexis would flash out in temper, rushing to beat the nearest man with his staff. In such outbreaks he had never crippled a man, and he sent gifts to the offender afterward.

Another impulse seized on him, when he hurried his young wife out of her apartments upstairs in the *terem* to a carriage or sleigh, bidding the driver take the two of them at a gallop out of the clock gate, along the river to a village or even up to Troitsko in its gardens. True, in such swift rides—utterly different from the pace-by-pace parade into and out of the Red Place—his wife Maria bundled up so that her white face, tinted with rouge, could hardly be seen. At other times in duty bound, Maria kept to ancient seclusion within the women's quarters, looking out at a feast from behind a screen, or out at a service in the Usspensky cathedral from the grilled gallery of the imperial ladies.

Alexis was aware, because his body servants told him, of the jests that foreigners made about this seclusion of Muscovite noblewomen. The foreign ambassadors and merchants called it monastic and Byzantine—to keep women hidden from the eyes of other men. But it was an ancient custom in Muscovy, and who was so bound by it as the tsaritsa herself?

One of the foreigners, a certain Adam Olearius, had published a book about the Muscovites in the German language only the year before. Parts of the book had been read to the young Alexis, who remembered Adam Olearius vaguely as a neat foreigner with curled hair and waxed mustache but *without a beard*. Olearius had been forever measuring things and looking at the sun through a brass instrument called an astro-labe. Some among the Muscovites believed him to be a sorcerer. After he had left Muscovy he had written in his book:

“The greatest honor a Muscovite could do a friend is to let

him see his wife . . . a nobleman led me after dinner into another room where he told me that I could not have a greater proof of his esteem than this. Immediately, I saw his wife come in, clad in a festive dress and followed by a girl who carried a flask of spirits and a silver cup. The lady touched the cup with her lips and bade me empty it—three times. After that the nobleman wanted me to kiss her, which surprised me greatly because even in our country of Holstein we do not offer such civility. That is why I wished to content myself with kissing her hand. But he forced me so obligingly to kiss her mouth that it was impossible to refrain from doing so.”

Alexis believed that the shrewd *scientific* Olearius had not understood his Russian people.

These western notions did not agree, certainly, with ancient Muscovite usage. It seemed both simple and pleasant to Alexis to borrow from the west such needful things as clocks and cannon and books, while still keeping to the way of life of his father, the first Romanov . . . as simple as stealing out to ride with Maria in the fast sled, where he could feel her shoulder touching his and watch the steam of her breath merge with his.

Maria was not with him when the hands touched his reins. He was riding in at a foot pace from Troitsko with his boyars and grooms. At the city gate the crowd that waited, instead of bending heads and shouting “*Gosudar!*” came around him complaining, the lined faces sweating, the voices crying out complaints. Some hands even plucked at his sleeves; after he had listened to them he told them he was sorry they felt wronged by the councilors who served him, and that he would see that any offenders should be made honest.

But the younger boyars with him whipped the nearest of the common crowd away from him with their *nagaikas*, and peasants threw stones at his escort, not harming him but shouting, “The tsar is kind—his dog boys bite us.”

After that day when hands touched him, crowds pressed against the Kremlin gates, even after meat and beer had been sent out to them. They demanded that the offending councilors be put to death, and Alexis spoke to them again, feeling tears in his eyes. . . . Smoke rose over Moscow when whole



streets burned, and the guards of the gates were replaced by foreign soldiers who stood their post with flintlocks raised and drums beating.

Alexis knew little more of the rioting than that. Two of his councilors were sent away to exile in the east, and he heard that the leaders of the rioting had been made to feel their deaths. After that outcry of the people, his councilors made new laws, a new *Uluzhenie* of Alexis, binding the black or common folk closely to the land on which they worked, and forbidding them sinful amusements.

Like a wave rising on a wind-swept lake, the disturbance spread. It spread along the thoroughfares of the rivers. Fisher-folk of the northern rivers stripped government taxpayers to their shirts; at Ustiug workers in the textile mills beat up inspectors. Cities like Pskov far from Moscow stormed and raged, and fought soldiery sent to quiet them. On the western frontier crowds broke into government warehouses and seized the stores of grain.

The wave of restlessness had no single impulse. It went against payment of tax money, against "German science" like that of the mathematician Olearius, against the new laws forbidding singing and dancing or the movement of peasant families from one property to another.

Not that the stubborn and ignorant people of the hamlets understood in the least that this new law chained them to their fields to work henceforth unceasingly as serfs. They simply resented the ukaz that forbade them to change fields and masters on St. George's day, after the last of the harvest was in. The mass of the people held fast to the religion of old time, of saints, fasts, and miracles. More than that, all these people had in common a great craving for land, for good land to till.

The old faith and new land—such might have been the creed of the *moujik* of Muscovy if he had been articulate enough to utter it. By it he lived, after his fashion, in the toilsome *mir* or small community where tasks were shared, and the folk invoked the village priest for the protection of the saints of God. The life of the *mir* had developed not in the few cities but in the many settlements scattered over a vast

and inhospitable land. The peasants feared anything that attacked this ancient life of the mir. And when they feared a thing they were apt to run away from it.

Even at nineteen years of age Alexis Romanov had an understanding of his people. He himself felt troubled when a western invention like an astrolabe was held up to the sun, and Maria protested and wept when the young, sharp-minded patriarch, Nikon, forced people to read from a new book of prayer. Was it not a sin to change what the saints had fashioned in elder days? What truth could ever be found greater than the word of ancient truth?

"Be merciful to these rebellious folk," Nikon warned his young monarch. And Alexis granted mercy.

In the darkness of the Usspensky nave, where the walls were stained with candle smoke, Alexis prayed for guidance. He prayed to be preserved from the sickness of mind of the Romanov family, from the misfortune that had made his grandfathers exiles in the new land of the east, and, above all, that his country of Muscovy should be preserved from a second Time of Troubles such as his father had known.

It was not told him, because even the "eyes" of the government hardly perceived it, how masses of people were in motion from the Moscow area toward the east. They followed the frozen threads of the northern rivers. They trundled in carts along the highroad to Kazan and Perm. They escaped from punishment in the rebellious cities of Novgorod and Pskov by taking to the forest.

They wandered as only Slavs can wander, growing harvests on the way, working for food or going without food, but always tending east, to the water of the Volga.

Beyond the Volga there were fewer government garrisons to stop them. They rode the empty salt barges up the Kama River, they climbed the grassy shoulders of the Urals. By the paths of charcoal burners they crossed the ridges to the eastern slopes.

Slipping by the customs stations, they followed bands of hunters or colonists where no roads led, farther to the east.

Here, beyond the customs, they called themselves "free wandering men."

*Dezhnev the Hunter*

In June of that year 1648 one hunter, Semyen Dezhnev, ventured farthest east. On the records of the government post at Yakutsk he is called a "cossack," which meant a frontiersman under hire either as colonist or fighter. And what he actually did, unwittingly, was extraordinary.

With twenty-five hunters—one of the exploring groups by which the Slavs had penetrated to farther Asia, more than a year's travel and more than a hundred degrees of longitude east of Moscow—Semyen Dezhnev departed from the blockhouse of Yakutsk. Passing through the coldest region on earth (the Cold Pole), the Dezhnev band built two longboats of hewn timber bound with hides, using reindeer skins for sails. In the brief summer thaw when marsh water flooded the dark rivers flowing toward the Arctic, the two boats of the cossacks joined the expedition of a merchant Alexiev who had made his way to this jumping-off place to hunt for a new supply of sables, the most precious of furs.

Dezhnev had a fancy. On that bleakest of all frontiers he had heard of a river named the Pogicha where birches grew and corn could be planted, and sleek deer hunted. So the natives said. But neither cossacks nor Muscovites had been able to set eyes on the Pogicha. Sables for the merchant Alexiev? Certainly, Dezhnev swore, there would be sables on the Pogicha.

So in June the three boats passed down the last explored river, the Kolima, into the ice-studded waters of the Arctic where the sky lowered over their heads. Following the bare coast eastward, they came upon no trace of the elusive Pogicha, or of Alexiev's sables.

Instead Alexiev was wounded by a spear fighting the fish-skin-clad natives, the Chukchi whose only wealth consisted of ivory tusks. And when they tried to round a great cape veiled in mist, Alexiev's boat was wrecked.

Later Dezhnev said in his report: "This cape is different . . . lying north by northeast, it turns in a circle. On the near side there is a stream, and beside the stream the Chukchi have

built a thing like a tower of whalebone. Out from this cape are two islands where Chukchi were seen with walrus tusks in holes in their lips. On its far side the cape turns toward the river Anadir."

Wind drove Dezhnev's ill-made boats out to those islands, and then south. Mist hid the shore. Yet the cossacks were sailing *south* instead of northeast. They did not know where.

In October Dezhnev's boats were wrecked on this southern shore and his party made their way back where natives told them a river was. They found it at the tip of a great inlet, without timber or native villages.

They had no gear for fishing. Twelve of the party sent up-river died, all but two or three, from starvation. Dezhnev built huts to winter in, and found out that his river was named the Anadir. Next year they made a new boat and discovered a sandbank where "sea cows" gathered and tusks were to be picked up. This was all the wealth that Semyen Dezhnev had in his quest of six years for the Pogicha.

Still, he kept alive with his surviving comrades, exploring their barren *southern* coast, finding more ivory or collecting it by guns from the natives, who fought them savagely.

After 1650 other cossack bands reached them, coming down the Anadir, overland from the Kolima. And with these Dezhnev struggled for possession of his sandbank with its yearly trove of a few walrus tusks.

When at last he returned to Yakutsk, he made his famous report which fills about a page and a half. This he did because he wanted it clearly understood that he had reached the sandbank *by sea*, in boats from the Kolima, while the other interlopers had come across the heights by land. So the sandbank and its tusks belonged to him, by right of discovery.

Unknowing, Dezhnev had made a greater discovery. His "impassable" cape is actually the tip of Asia: its islands are those in Bering Strait between the cape and the western tip of America. The cossack Dezhnev had discovered the end of the Asiatic continent.

His report, written down, and signed, was put away among piles of documents in the Yakutsk office, and there it lay for-

gotten for nearly a century, until 1736. Of his discovery and the forgetfulness of Yakutsk much was to come later on.<sup>1</sup>

Semyen Dezhnev, who had made the passage of an ice-filled polar sea, to emerge in the mist-veiled waters of the Pacific Ocean, survived the ordeal. But he was the only leader who survived this particular quest for the elusive river Pogicha. Alexiev, the merchant adventurer, had died of his wound. So a Chukchi woman explained to Dezhnev. As for Alexiev's companions, "Their teeth fell out of their gums"—which meant that scurvy had carried them off. As for the other explorers who arrived at the sandbank on the Pacific side, Michael Staduchin, a cossack from Yakutsk, disappeared on a venture inland; Motora, another cossack, was killed by tribes up the Anadir River from whom he had taken captives to sell. And few of Dezhnev's surviving companions returned to Yakutsk, because the stubborn cossack spent years building more long-boats in the limbo of the Arctic to search by sea for the missing Pogicha.

### *The Freebooters of Yakutsk*

Few among the inhabitants of Yakutsk could have had any interest in the story of Semyen Dezhnev when he found his way back to that frontier town on the frozen Lena River.

The inhabitants of that blockhouse town—known as an *ostrog*—had other more important matters to occupy them. The handful of Muscovite soldiers, armed with matchlocks, had the wooden towers of the gates to guard against hostile tribesmen—no natives were allowed to spend the night within the gates, except captured young women. The "Liths," or foreign soldiers—prisoners of war shipped out from Moscow—had their own barracks and families to provide for.

On the crest of the hill within the stockade, the *voevode* or military governor had his "palace," like a citadel, guarding the priceless stocks of grain, honey, and wine shipped out so laboriously on heavy barges from river to river. The *dyak* or secretary-inspector had all he could do to watch the governor. The priests built a towering log church with whitewashed cupola, and they quarreled with the governor who endeavored

to exact furs by force from the natives instead of converting them.

Icebound during the long winter months, and left to their own devices for the most part by the far-off government at Moscow, the people of Yakutsk struggled among themselves



Isbrandt Ides

Russian explorers in Siberia, with short skis and dog sleds

and contrived ways to keep warm and alive, while they dreamed of lush rivers, of gold and silver mines, of troves of sables, ermine or black fox furs, the finding of which meant a fortune gained and the chance to live, released from their exile, in the comfortable cities of the west.

When they sallied out in bands to search through the snow-bound forests for such will-o'-the-wisps, they found only the reality of beaver skins, small hoards of silver coins to be plundered, or fish-ivory and the tusks of mammoths buried in perpetually frozen ground.

Beyond the Urals, ghosts walked the forest—shades of great conquistadors. The ghost of Irmak, the son of the Don, who had driven the Tatars from the threshold of Sibir, and the shade of that other *ataman*, Poyarkov, who had built a fleet out of forest timber to sail down the last river, the Amur, and come back alive with a thousand souls to sell as slaves.

Beyond the Urals such men as these gained dominions or fortunes by their ready wit and tough consciences. Squire Honey was one of them. A Pole, Khmielnevsky, a learned soul who could read books in Latin, and quote an authority named Ovid on the twin joys of life, drunkenness and love. He had made a great name for himself in Moscow during the late Time of Troubles. So he had been exiled beyond the Urals, and jailed as well. But how could a log jail hold a man of such superior education? After only a few years at the terminus of Tobolsk the disciple of Ovid was given the rank of squire and sent farther east to inspect the newest ostrog, which was then Yeniseisk. Tobolsk, it seemed, was glad to be rid of Squire Honey.

Thus freed, Squire Honey made an inspection journey that became the talk of the folk from Tobolsk to Yeniseisk. First he had only a few men to follow him, then he had an army; first he had at his side only one Lithuanian girl, then she was joined by a bevy of Tataresses.

Apparently he started with a portable still as well. By borrowing stocks of government grain, he obtained a supply of corn brandy. At that time a glass of brandy was worth a sable skin, and ten sable skins could buy a woman. As he proceeded on his journey, Squire Honey acquired a thousand sable skins, without counting in beaver or fox. And he changed his Tatar girls for Ostiaks.

At each post he explained that his new possessions were gifts from voevodes down the road. So the voevode at that post usually hastened to make a gift of his own—a keg of wine or sack of precious tobacco. If he did not, this educated inspector would shake his head ominously over the account books, and hint that his friends in Tobolsk would not be pleased with the accounts.

At the native villages he gave the chieftains a little liquor or

tobacco, and selected their best furs as gifts in exchange. His Lithuanian girl, however, he would never sell.

Since Squire Honey traveled so slowly, in this fashion, news of his manner of inspection caught up with him and passed him. Again he found himself in jail, stripped of his rank, wealth, and volunteer army. One voevode had sent all the way to Tobolsk to discover that the inspector actually had no powerful friends there. As before, however, he did not remain long in jail.

It happened that the two voevodes of the town where he was incarcerated had been quarreling and Squire Honey had not been long behind a locked door, before the rival voevodes began a civil war. Squire Honey's educated tongue could tell them about feuds such as that. To settle the war he was released. Whereupon he drew up a "plan for conquest of the Lena River region" and he was shipped east again to carry it out. He must have died on this last journey because he never reached the Lena.

But a greater than Khmielnevsky reached the Lena, and the tale of his fortunes was told like the saga of Squire Honey's inspection. Yarka Khabarov, who came from Ustiug, had a way of transforming things into money. When he moved east, to the fur terminal of Mangazeia in the northern forest, the fur trade was at its flood, and Yarka Khabarov turned skins into money.

A few years later when Mangazeia burned down the boom town was not rebuilt because the flood of furs was ebbing. Khabarov moved east to the Lena. Where the river Kuta portage joins the Lena he built a saltworks, getting as much silver for his salt as other men did for smuggled tobacco. To feed his workers this enterpriser tilled miles of land, and raised corn to sell.

By the time Khabarov had become not a mere merchant prince but a merchant emperor, the voevode of Yakutsk took his holdings from him by a writ of authority and the guns of soldiers. He moved a little way up the Lena and started new plantations where the soil was rich. Again the governor of Yakutsk interfered, sending out a draft of settlers to join Yarka Khabarov's followers.



By this time the intelligent Khabarov had learned his lesson—that settlements could be confiscated by better-armed rivals. Settlements could not be moved away to safety.

So, having turned first furs and then salt and corn into money, this great enterpriser tried a new field of enterprise by moving about armed. The settlers from Yakutsk he drove away by gunfire from his stockades, and speedily he went himself to Yakutsk, where he raised an army of some hundred and fifty adventurers easily enough by offering more pay than the governor of Yakutsk. In that frontier metropolis there were plenty of men like Dezhnev to follow a strong leader. And Khabarov was not only strong but overbearing.

Under the circumstances the voevode of Yakutsk was not only agreeable but eager that Khabarov should depart, with full authority to find what enterprise he could undertake beyond the frontier, down the Amur River, where he would be the neighbor, not of Yakutsk, but of the Chinese Manchus.

For years this energetic conquistador launched his fleets down the Amur, toward rich grainlands and hamlets of human beings who could be captured and sold. His small army was supplied with cannon by the governor of Yakutsk. He captured a Manchu garrison town and made it his headquarters. By stealing down the river in boats or making forced marches farther into the fertile river basin, he managed to surprise villagers before the inhabitants could escape. Or if they did flee, burdened with carts and herds, he overtook them. When they shut themselves up in the hamlets, his cannon pounded the wooden walls to pieces, and his freebooters surged in to take captives. After one assault he reported:

"With prayers to God . . . after hard fighting we counted six hundred and forty-one, big and little, killed. We took captive two hundred and forty-three women and girls, and one hundred and eighteen children, with two hundred thirty-seven horses."

These captives, human and animal, could serve as slaves in Khabarov's new army of the Amur, or they could be sold for money. He sold the best of them for forty to a hundred rubles a head. The conquest grew along the Amur, yet fighting broke out endemically among Khabarov's own bands. Some of

his cossacks moved away to start enterprises of their own; more cossacks journeyed out from Yakutsk with powder and lead.

Still, there was no proper place in the government scheme of things for a Yarka Khabarov. He was summoned back to Moscow, accused of cruelty, extortion, and murder, and his greatest conquest was taken from him entire by the Siberian Bureau.

However, Khabarov, the successful, was not punished. He described in Moscow how a new empire could be extended along the Amur, and grain and salt, furs and silver be had from its inhabitants. Ermine could be found, and sold to the Chinese—jewels could be mined from the mountains of that fortunate land! Gravely Yarka Khabarov told the secretaries in Moscow that the pillars of conquest of no less an explorer than Alexander the Great had been found on his river “where the sun rises beyond the mountain Karkaur.” Khabarov was pardoned, given noble rank, and sent back to organize his conquest. To-day out there a city is named for him.

Irmak of Sibir, Ivan Petlin, who found his way into and out of the Great Wall of China, Khmielnevsky, Poyarkov the ataman, and Yarka Khabarov—they had iron in them, they went where devils feared to go. They kept and used the land and human beings they found, in whatever way.

“Old dwellers” on the frontiers—not one of them came out of Moscow—three of them Cossacks<sup>2</sup> from the free brotherhoods of the steppes, they held tenaciously to their conquests, not flitting on after game like hunters, or wandering the paths between settlements like traders. Not one of them started out with the blessing of Moscow, or even with authorization from Moscow. Irmak, the greatest of them, had been a Volga brigand pursued by Muscovite officials, and Khmielnevsky had been a jailbird of strange plumage.

No, they had gone their own way like the thousands of “free wandering men” who crossed the invisible frontier of the Urals after them, drawn for the most part by the wealth to be gleaned from furs. The government agencies, following cautiously behind, had also tapped this wealth by making it a

monopoly, by sending out dyaks to keep the accounts of the new settlements, and by claiming a tribute of furs from the natives.

Never had the take of pelts been so enormous as after the mid-seventeenth century. Yakutsk sent in the value of thirty thousand rubles in a year. That had been the valuation of the dyaks in the far east; in Furriers' Row and the Sable Treasury in Moscow it was much greater. During these years single hunters along the Lena could kill with clubs as many as a dozen of the heedless sables that strayed into their camps in a day. At that rate they were exterminating the valuable beasts.<sup>3</sup> Already the explorers of the land's end, Dezhnev, Motora, and Staduchin and their comrades, had found the hunting bad beyond the Lena. The flood of furs and the resulting tide of wealth that flowed westward to Moscow was destined to dwindle by the end of the century.

Already hard reality was dispelling the hope of untold wealth. Khmielnevsky had profited most from his portable still; Khabarov had made his fortune from grainland and the sale of captives, while Dezhnev had had to fight for his few ivory tusks.

By this time the bureaus of Moscow rather than the artels of the frontier sought for fabulous fertile rivers, for mountains of silver, for gold rock and precious stones shining with their own fire—for simple iron, lead and tin, the metals Moscow lacked utterly. "Sibir has a golden soil" was said in the Red Place, not on the frontier. Naturally, the tall tales told for their own ends by the Khmielnevskys and Khabarovs did not serve to disillusion the secretaries in the Kremlin about the wealth of "Sibir."

For by now this new land of the east had gained a name, Sibir. It had been known vaguely as the new land beyond the Urals, or as Tatar. The Tatar town of Sibir had become the gateway of the migrants to the east, and the first Muscovite terminal, Tobolsk, had been built close to it. Sibir had been the Alamo rather than the Seven Cities of Cibola of this unknown east, yet it gave the east its name.

Sibir yielded the migrants soil rather than gold. Grassland edged the headwaters of the great Arctic-flowing rivers. Here

the illimitable hills were blue with timber, the rushing waters so full of fish that often shoals of them would be forced out on the banks. The feather-grass plains were so rife with deer that herds of them could be driven and caught against a palisade. It was this craving for soil to cultivate that anchored the migrants to the new land in spite of great hardships.

The churches also took root in the new ground. The clergy who followed the migrants across the Urals came prepared to cultivate the earth as well as lead prayer; their small log churches rose quickly enough in the best fields; the peasants of their monasteries cleared the forest edge. The monasteries themselves were built like blockhouses, with storage space for grain and towers to shelter the congregations against raiders.

True, the first archbishop who ventured out to Tobolsk, with a chest of holy relics for the new altars, had trouble separating the monks from the nuns in this wilderness, and in separating priests from wine drinking. And when he wished to canonize Irmak as a saint—to give to Tobolsk a saint of its own—he found that the great pathfinder could not be named a saint. The folk of the countryside remembered him too well.

These archbishops of Tobolsk, like the village priests elsewhere, understood very well that the first need in the new land was to feed the people. They devoted themselves, above all, to acquiring acreage and "souls" to work the acres, until very soon commands began to arrive from Moscow to the voevode of Tobolsk to "watch carefully that the archbishop does not seize any more land."

The archbishops, however, developed skill in frustrating such commands. From their side the Urals they petitioned Moscow: how were the blind, the crippled, the starving and homeless to be cared for, by God's will, unless more acres could be harvested?

One of them, Gerasim, fairly triumphed in this bloodless battle of agriculture. As soon as he reached Tobolsk he petitioned that his salary be paid in grain, not money. He besought gifts of land, not money. In due time arrived an order from Moscow that "the archbishop must not gain more land by donation." But Gerasim had anticipated such an order, and he

had put settlers with a hastily built chapel on the disputed ground. As the tsar had his "eyes" in Tobolsk to spy for him, the archbishop had his "ears" in the halls of the Kremlin to listen for him. To Moscow he wrote a truly heartbreaking petition. How could he deprive poor people of their living, or tear down a house of God? Again the victory was to the archbishop.

When death came to Gerasim, the church of Tobolsk had more than six hundred souls to sow and harvest, and more than twelve thousand acres. It was secure against famine and the anger of the voevode of Tobolsk. For the devout Alexis, son of Michael, had been tsar during these last years of Gerasim, and the young Alexis, of all people, had been least able to refuse one of Gerasim's soul-searching petitions.

Slowly, with all the tenacity of Slavs, out of this craving of an illiterate peasantry for land, and this "old usage" of a backward priesthood, a human core was being formed at the entrance to Siberia. For both the settler and the village priest, unlike the conquistadors, had come to stay on the land.

### *The Tsar's Plan and the Bureau's Performance*

Strangely enough, as the seventeenth century drew toward its end, these same settlers and priests became the most stable force in the new dominion of Siberia.

There was of course a plan of government for this land. Alexis, the Great Master, had issued in his *Uluzhenie* some regulations for the people in the east. Mildly enough, the tsar wished both the native folk and the settlers to be taxed only moderately—at a tenth or so of their produce, crops and furs. No natives were to be oppressed, forcibly converted, or enslaved by agents of Moscow.

Beyond the Urals, however, the intelligent plan did not seem to operate. The folk there had a saying, "Moscow is far and heaven is high." Alexis himself had never ventured far out of sight of the Kremlin towers. The boyars who issued the orders to be carried out in the three and a half million square miles of "Siberia" occupied a few chambers in the Razriad or Bureau of Military Affairs within the Kremlin. The secretaries

who actually managed the accounts of the Sibirsky Prikaz or Siberian Bureau had to submit their accounts in turn to the Treasury, and naturally they desired to show as much revenue taken in as possible, even after the fur trade dwindled, and "gold rock" failed to materialize.

Roughly, the bureau regarded the new territory as a source of taxation, a vast military encampment into which political exiles might be sent to labor, as the powerful Razriad demanded. But the human integers of the plan had a way of trying to make a profit for themselves. So the plan worked itself out somewhat in this fashion:

#### I THE VOEVODES

The voevodes, for instance, the governors of the posts in the east, should have been war veterans of the upper noble class; actually they were often friends of the heads of the Sibirsky Prikaz. Given good salaries, they were allowed to journey eastward with wives and household serfs, and cart-loads of wine and honey.

In coaches bearing the emblem of the two-headed eagle, these voevodes often traveled for a year or more to reach their posts, following not the roads—because there were no roads as yet—but the traces of routes where post stations stood every fifty versts—stations modeled on those of the Mongol *yam* or horse post, manned by *yamschiks* sent out by order of the bureau, with horses, a stock of food for themselves, a pair of watchdogs, and enough land to support their families. It was the duty of the *yamschik* to take on to the next station every traveler who could show the seal of the bureau. In summer this often meant working a boat upstream along a river; in winter the stage could be made more swiftly by sleigh on the river ice. Often *yamschiks* disappeared with their families to seek better living elsewhere. So, more often than not, the post stations did not exist.

Since the voevodes remained on duty only two or three years, most of them exerted themselves to gather a private stock of the best furs and the money available in their districts, to carry back with them. Such accretions were explained as "gifts" from the native headmen, or settlers. The dyaks, the

secretaries who kept the post accounts, and the customs agent who collected the official tax might be expected to overlook such gifts, if they received similar gifts themselves. The exactions of these governors and secretaries served to set them at feud with the settlers, hunters, and priests of the post.

Alexis' regulations forbade the departing voevode to leave his citadel until the new voevode had checked his accounts. But sables and ermine pelts could be hidden, and who could prove where silver money came from? Customs inspectors at the Ural frontier often found the mattresses of homecoming voevodes stuffed with furs, and the voevodes themselves wearing long coats of the finest dark sable or valuable black fox. The bureau decreed that no voevode could bring out of Siberia more than an accountable increase over the money and goods he took in. Many voevodes contrived to borrow money and gear from friends, to register with the customs on their entrance, and to return to their friends thereafter. Then the home-coming voevodes could display their private stock of furs and goods to the bureau's inspectors at Verkhoturie, the main control point in the Urals, and swear on the holy books that they were bringing back no greater value than they had taken out.

## II THE PROFITEERS

The bureau that existed to glean taxes from the new land could not check the rapacity and the ingenuity of its officials in profiting for themselves. A copper pot at the Ilmsk post was worth as many sable skins as would fill it; those same sable skins smuggled back to Moscow would be worth three times their price at Ilmsk. The voevode at Ilmsk, exiled to a river in the wilderness of dark fir forest, was distant more than five hundred miles by trail from higher authority in Irkutsk or Yeniseisk. What was to prevent him from forcing his private stock of trade goods—"iron implements," woven cloth, cheap beads—on the traders of the post, for good furs? The traders in their turn could force the native villages to give up new furs for the cheap goods. Khabarov took more than nine thousand sable pelts from the northern Giliaks alone.

The saying "No one comes back empty-handed from Siberia" became a proverb.

The Uluzhenie of the mild Alexis forbade officials to exact more than the lawful yearly tax—of some eight skins—from a native household. But the fur-bearing animals and native hunters alike tended to thin out in a voevode's district. It was unquestionably much simpler for the voevode to demand more pelts from the surviving hunters than to explain in writing to the secretaries of the bureau, four thousand miles distant in Moscow, why the customary tax could not be collected. An official who showed a profit usually escaped the vague threat of "the tsar's anger, and cruel punishment." Alexis increased the term of service of voevodes; the result was more fighting between the voevodes' henchmen and the "old dwellers" of the settlements

### III THE VUDKA MONOPOLY

Vudka added to the trouble. Officially the brewing and sale of spirits was a state monopoly, as it had been under the Tatar khans. In consequence the Sibirsky Prikaz operated public pothouses throughout the eastern settlements and along the post roads. Since the price of vudka, brandy, or plain honey beer was fixed, the keepers of these *kabacs* or taverns thrived by selling a glassful for a sable skin out the back doors. Voevodes and some of the foreign soldiery had the right to distill spirits, not to sell them. But where such "wine," as they called it, could be sold for nearly five rubles (equivalent to about four English pounds sterling in 1670) a wooden pailful, voevodes often brewed a stock to hand over to their agents to "feast the chieftains" of the native villages and to bring back furs for every drink. The voevodes brewed these spirits from precious grain abstracted from the public granaries.

### IV THE GRAIN DEFICIENCY

In Moscow, where the boyars of the bureau climbed the palace stairs with their accounts every month to bow to the floor before Alexis and discuss their problems, the shortage of grain in the east appeared to be one of the trials imposed on them by God's will. Every year the bureau sent, or tried to



send, a boat caravan of grain out, even to Yakutsk, the farthest terminal. These weighty grain barges had to be worked across the northern rivers, across the Arctic gulfs, a journey of nearly two years. Inevitably much of the caravan was lost or appropriated on the way. Muscovite agents, accustomed to a bread staple, sickened on a diet of abundant fish and salt meat.

Attempts to transplant peasant cultivators to the Yakutsk area failed, because many died on the journey out, and the peasants could not bring crops of barley and oats out of the strange soil in the fleeting summers. The peasants themselves drifted away from the "sovereign's land," where they were allowed only half their produce, to virgin territory where they could keep all their crops. Such escaping serfs could be caught in the Moscow area where the roads were guarded; in the eastern lands they disappeared into the wilderness, or hired out in strange settlements. Men were badly needed east of the Urals—where some eighty thousand souls, including perhaps fifteen thousand servants of the bureau, had pushed their tiny habitations into the limbo of a continent.

#### V THE SOLDIERY

The bureau had drafted some two thousand soldiers for the Siberian service. Each *strelitz*—matchlock firer—who began the march across the Urals, convinced that he would never return, had been given a ruble and a half to pay his way. Contingents of *Streletsi* paid their own way, additionally, by looting villages along the road. On the appearance of such a soldier draft, the settlers barred their gates and went out armed with food and money to offer the marchers, if they would pass on without tarrying.

If the marching Streletsi looted and then obliterated by fire an outlying settlement, who was to enforce punishment on them? Not the "Liths" or foreign soldiery—Poles and Lithuanians, Danes and Ukrainians, either mercenaries or prisoners of war—or the adventuring cossacks. Beyond the Urals such troops as these would obey, in a pinch, only their own leaders.

Exile for the armed guards was worse beyond the Ob, out on the great plateau swept by Arctic winds. At Yana, near

where Dezhnev and Alexiev had built their first boats, the longer half of the year was spent in twilight, in the grip of extreme frost. No Russian women penetrated that far. And in the winter bands of masterless men who had existed through the summer in the forest came and besieged the stockaded forts, driven by hunger.

Conditions were still worse for the Muscovites who had to keep the out-camps, the "year men" who made the far fur-collecting rounds. When their horses and weapons were stolen by invisible thieves, they took dog sleds and skis from the villages, and women as well. They could not adapt themselves to the land like the steppe-born Cossacks or the river-bred Volga *burlaki*—boatmen. Even the Cossacks had a song about this land:

*Hard are the winter days, lad,  
When your hide cracks open,  
And ice grips your heart—  
Ahai—the sun is gone!  
Hard are the winter days, lad!*

#### VI ENSLAVEMENT OF ASIATICS

The bureau's agents may have been told of the Uluzhenie of the tsar in Moscow that forbade enslaving the eastern peoples. Yet inevitably they acquired natives as body servants to gather berries and wood, to guide them from village to village and to "hunt with hawks." If, in spite of that, they were near starvation, they loaded their guns and seized hostages from these same villages, to exchange for food. Some of the native Siberians declared that Muscovites had been seen to eat human flesh when hungering.

#### VII THE DESERTERS

The bureau punished desertion heavily. Leaders of deserters were hanged, while searchers were knouted with the iron-tipped lash if they returned without the missing men. Also, if a man disappeared from a squad or company, the unit was punished as a whole—which often led to the disappearance of squads or companies as a whole.

Then, too, the bureau had formed its military guards by classes, the superiors being listed and paid as "boyars' sons," the better pioneers as "cossacks," while the foreigners were kept apart in detachments of their own. This led to trouble when different classes were immured together in a post like Yakutsk, especially in winter. At Yakutsk the cossacks petitioned the voevode not to be sent out on expeditions with the boyars' sons (superior in rank to them). This petition complained that the boyars' sons brewed "wine" to sell from the grain reserve, that they sent out wandering traders to collect furs, thus sharing profits with the traders (instead of with the cossacks, it seems), that the boyars' sons took bribes to allow hostages held by the cossacks to escape, while they tortured their own hostages in the hope of getting ransom. Finally, the cossacks claimed that such conduct on the part of the boyars' sons caused the natives to waylay and kill cossacks.

On its part the bureau complained that its servingmen tended to dress and act more like "Tatars," while the bureau itself began to hire Tatars to replace deserters, thus creating a new class of armed servants, not according to plan.

By the 1660s deserters from isolated posts like Ilimsk and Yakutsk were drifting in strong bands over the heights through the combative Mongols and Buriats, southerly to the warmer basin of the Amur which lay beyond the authority of the voevodes, being close to the Chinese frontier posts. Since the bureau had set a reward of three rubles for the capture of such deserters, the tribesmen had learned that they could profit from the fugitives. The Buriat and Mongol horsemen would examine a captured Muscovite to decide whether his clothing and kit was worth more than three rubles; if not, they would take him in to the nearest Russian post. In retaliation the Russians often tied a captured Buriat to a tree and "put a red cap on him"—a copper pot heated red-hot, and put over his head.

This mutual retaliation between the war bands of the bureau and the still powerful Mongols and Buriats did not help to keep the peace along the far eastern frontier.

And always the bureau was vexed by the resentment of its own servants beyond the Urals. That bitter resentment grew

out of the pittance of pay given lower-class guards, inspectors, and clerks in an area where boyars' sons and higher officials waxed rich from loot and from withholding the pay of their inferiors; it increased under the almost intolerable hardships of the posts in northeastern Siberia. At all the posts the military and clerical detachments resented the enforced labor at building stockades and cultivating the adjacent ground. To remedy this last, the bureau drafted skilled workmen and peasants in the western towns and sent them into the Siberian service. Whereupon many of the workmen and peasants disappeared from the posts to join the growing ranks of the "free wandering men."

#### VIII MIGRATION FROM THE POSTS

Another phenomenon troubled the Siberian Bureau. The posts themselves tended to disappear—especially in the north—while settlements never marked on the maps tended to appear—especially in the south. The great northern terminal of Mangazeia near the gulf of the Ob was now an ash heap sprinkled with the huts of wanderers. The fur traffic from which Khabarov had profited had ceased to pass through the Mangazeia route forty years after the post was built. Along this same northern route, thousands of miles to the east, the posts of Turukhansk and Yakutsk were half deserted. Their stockades, churches, and warehouses still stood; their inhabitants had drifted away to warmer climates, better soil, and freedom from the authority of voevodes, in the south.

One portion of the population of Turukhansk and Yakutsk remained fixed: the inmates of the *katorgas* or state prisons for political exiles recently built there by order of the Razriad which dictated the plan of the Siberian Bureau. The *katorga* exiles could be called upon to do the labor of the missing inhabitants of these northern posts. The icebound ostrog of Yana could be manned only by a skeleton force of drafted men.

On the other hand, newer settlements in the milder south-east tended to grow unexpectedly and not according to the bureau's plan. Nerchinsk, founded on one of the headwaters of the Amur, near the caravan route to the Great Wall of

China, was thronged with human flotsam of the frontier. Irkutsk, overlooking Baikal, the holy lake of the Mongol peoples, had been almost unknown a generation after the building of Yakutsk and Yana; now Irkutsk was developing into a large



town. So large that the bureau built a *katorga* for women there, near the nunnery.

The northern routes, of course, were being deserted because the fur intake that had brought them into being was diminishing. The bureau made an attempt, late in the day, to set aside areas as game preserves, to protect the better sort of

gray squirrel, black fox, and sable. The chief consequence was that independent hunters moved elsewhere.

Throughout its vast terrain, the bureau in Moscow watched the spontaneous migration of whole communities—priests, hunters, peasants, and women. Such migration of a mir always tended southerly toward fertile, grain-producing river valleys. Such a self-sustaining human group could erect its log dwellings and plow its new lands in a single summer.

So, while the old fur routes of the bureau were being deserted toward the end of the seventeenth century, the newer routes of agricultural colonization were making a pattern of their own that would endure. By 1685, the settlers produced adequate grain supply at points as far east as Yeniseisk and Irkutsk. They also discovered that the western breeds of cattle thrived along the southern Siberian grasslands. No order of the bureau could make these settlers remain where oats and barley would not grow, or cattle survive.

The monasteries, as we have seen, followed their own course, working their own lands and fortifying their new buildings—actually taking some pains to report to Moscow smaller holdings of land and peasantry than they in reality possessed.

Although the elaborate plan of the Siberian Bureau was failing in so many ways, it had a decisive *effect* on the growing population east of the Urals. It created cleavages between the military groups, such as the Liths, the true Cossacks, and the musketeers of Moscow. By refusing to give the east a governing city—since all finances and operations had to stem from the offices in the Kremlin, and Tobolsk near the Urals (the ostensible center of eastern administration) actually served as little more than the supply depot and message center for Moscow—it allowed no large towns to grow up.

Insensibly during these decades of the seventeenth century and not at all according to the bureau's plan, the native peoples came more and more into servitude, while the Muscovites who did not adhere to military discipline tended to become outlaws.

*Nikifor Chernigovsky's Republic*

There was bound to be a Nikifor Chernigovsky. He was a Pole, a prisoner of war, confined for a while in a Muscovite katorga in the east. Being an educated man, he rose to be overseer of other prison laborers, and married a handsome Polish girl. Early in the 1660s, still an exile, we hear of him as manager of the salt works (started by Khabarov) on the upper Lena, not far from the post of Ilmsk.

Chernigovsky and his wife, it seems, occupied a comfortable house. So comfortable that the voevode of Ilmsk took to paying them long visits. Until the night when the voevode departed with Chernigovsky's wife. The Pole, with some companions, followed the track of the voevode's party, and found and killed him. Then Chernigovsky's band went on to seize the voevode's property and arms at the Ilmsk blockhouse.

They could not stay on the Lena. Well armed and equipped, they pushed east beyond the frontier posts, swinging south out of the snowbound mountains, down to Khabarov's old hunting ground on the Amur. There they built boats, started to sow crops and to raid and trade on their own. And there they were joined by other fugitives, deserters from the dreaded Yana post, cossacks from Yakutsk, survivors of earlier expeditions to the Amur who had holed in along the tributary streams. More than a thousand fugitive souls were on the Amur that year.

Chernigovsky took command of these bands, and rebuilt Khabarov's town, which had been burned by Chinese border troops. In that center of Albazin he nursed into life what they called a "Cossack republic." The energetic Chernigovsky had not found a Pogicha but he had created one. The valley around Albazin's stockade was cultivated. Since hunting parties had not ravaged this territory, Chernigovsky's hunters brought in quantities of the finest sable and fox furs. Some of the citizens of this new republic took Chinese wives and traded with the Chinese merchants from Tsitsihar. Other citizens raided the Chinese frontier posts.

In the course of time the Siberian Bureau in far-off Moscow

passed on Chernigovsky's affair and condemned him to death, ordering "hard" knouting for his companions of the salt works. But grain grew on the Amur. Groups of settlers followed the cossacks to Albazin. Last appeared a monk carrying a wonder-working ikon. Aided by the ikon, he started a monastery in the best of the fields.

Word spread along the eastern frontier: "There is sanctuary on the Amur."

In spite of his death sentence, Chernigovsky had been careful to send occasional gifts of the choicest sables to the nearest Muscovite voevodes. In exchange they sent him powder and cannon. When a great merchants' caravan made the journey from Irkutsk to Peking, Chernigovsky took advantage of the opportunity in 1674 to send a gift of specially fine sables to the heads of the bureau at Moscow. He sent also a glowing description of his conquest of the Amur.

In Moscow the heads of the bureau looked at their maps, while the inspectors of the Sable Treasury examined the furs. Together they reached the conclusion that Chernigovsky deserved a pardon. The voevode killed by him had obviously been incompetent, while Chernigovsky had added a new territory to the fur empire.

In 1676 this new province with its town of Albazin was added to the Muscovite dominion. The records yield some interesting particulars of what took place in Albazin after that. A *katorga* was set up there. In 1680 a voevode of Albazin was killed by cossacks, who charged that he abused women.

In 1685 the Chinese sent an expedition up the Amur against Albazin, captured it, and allowed the garrison and populace to depart unharmed, with stores and arms.

So ended the very rudimentary republic Chernigovsky had set up. The loss of Albazin, apparently only a frontier incident, was to have consequences both in the Manchu court of Peking and in the Muscovite court.

As for the failure<sup>4</sup> of the early plan of the *Sibirsky Prikaz*, it had very great consequences. The milder native peoples fell into virtual slavery, allowed but not admitted by Moscow. Those able to resist began to resist. Tobolsk itself was attacked



by the Kirghiz. Farther east the Ostiaks, the eastern Kalmuks, and finally the strong Buriats caused trouble in turn.

The resistance movement spread even to the long-subjected Tungusi and Yakuts of the north (in the 1670s). This revolt was broken by the Siberian garrisons with cruelty. But it was not ended.

Paradoxically, while the chains of subjection were riveted more firmly on these native peoples, the Muscovites who crossed the Urals often escaped from bondage. Serfdom, now a law in the west—at least where it could be enforced by the authority of Moscow—had no hold as yet in the eastern colonies. You might say that the Muscovites became illegally free where the eastern peoples were illegally subjected.

The restlessness east of the Urals had been fanned by sporadic rebellion in the west. The flame of rebellion broke out, to die away and reappear elsewhere—first in rioting through the Moscow streets when a debased copper currency was given out to the populace, then among subjected Finnish and Tatar tribal groups, the Mordvas, Cheremiss, and Bashkirs, soon to be joined by Cossacks of the Don and Volga, led by Stenka Razin,<sup>5</sup> “sailing with his falcons, down Mother Volga . . . to the blue Caspian sea.”

While the western tribesmen fought for the overthrow of Muscovite rule (1662–63), the peasants rose against the barrier of serfdom, and the Cossacks and other still independent groups against the voevodes and Prikazni or bureau agents from Moscow. This popular reaction was suppressed only with great difficulty by the Muscovite army, and only after the frontier town of Astrakhan had held out as another “republic” like Chernigovsky’s.

Within Moscow itself, within the two-centuries-old battlements of the Kremlin, Alexis had heard the firing when his guardsmen had driven mobs away, down the streets. No one knew for certain the total of the dead, and no one told Alexis that five thousand or twelve thousand human beings might have been slain.

Reports made clear to him how the war in the Ukraine had

displaced so many Cossack communities, causing them to migrate east to the Don basin, the place called the "sanctuary of peoples." Because of the war and migration the grain crop of the Ukraine had failed for several years. Then came the years of famine, ending in an outbreak of plague. "The Time of Ruin" the Ukrainians called it. And after that, the rebellion.

### *The Young Natalia*

Like many another middle-aged man, after the death of his first wife Alexis the son of Michael married a young girl. In this case his choice had several consequences, among them being the birth of his fourteenth child shortly after the festival of St. Peter, the boy being christened Peter and known subsequently as Peter the Great.

The first wife, Maria Miloslavskaya, had grown more religious as time went on, while Alexis had mellowed perceptibly. At forty-two years of age the Veliki Gosudar, the Great Master of Rus, had been observed to stop his cortege in the streets to watch a Punch-and-Judy show, or to appear of an evening incognito at a house where musicians gathered with harpsichord, flutes, and violins to play a thing unheard of, a symphony. In fact Alexis had brought back a small heavy box which played music of its own accord at his bedside. All this was contrary to the code against devilish amusements.

Moreover the owner of the musical house did not conform to ancient Russian custom. By birth he was Matviev, the son of a dyak. His wife was a foreigner, a Scottish woman who rode about the streets in an open European carriage and appeared with naked face in the drawing room when the symphonies were played. His library of books was foreign, printed in Polish and Latin. Nor did Matviev conform in his habits. For he and his Scottish wife, it seemed, preferred to talk with Alexis about *philosophy* and such things rather than to obtain honors at court. On his part, Alexis liked to listen, as he sipped hot spiced wine; he called Matviev "Little Sergy" and made him the unofficial foreign minister of All of Rus. When the Ukrainian trouble came, Alexis made Little Sergy also minister of Ukrainian affairs.

It was all very unorthodox, even to the lovely dark-haired girl Natalia Kirilovna Naryshkin, who waited upon Matviev's wife—she was a niece, of an obscure family with Tatar blood in its ancestry. When Matviev remarked once that Natalia was of an age to marry, Alexis agreed. "I will find a husband," he promised, "for the little pigeon."

The next evening he announced that he would be the husband.

Matviev would not believe that. Bending his head to the floor, he cried, "My master, you would not destroy me!"

Skilled as he was in diplomacy, he realized instantly the hatred he would arouse among the great boyar families and particularly among the Miloslavsky clan, if the tsar were to announce that he meant to marry a girl who had exhibited herself publicly at Matviev's house.

"No, Little Sergy," Alexis said, "I would not do that."

He had a way of contriving things, of picking out competent men to handle responsibility and letting them do so without interference. Perhaps it was more than the physical charm of the girl that he sought. When he returned from Matviev's house, he climbed to the guarded terem among the towers of the Kremlin, where slept his two young sons Feodor and Ivan, the one afflicted with a blood taint that weakened him, the other a half-blind stammering imbecile. Apart from them lived his six healthy surviving daughters.

These princesses of an empire, cloistered from public view, had to conform to the life pattern of nuns. By ancient custom they were allowed to ride forth only in closed sleighs, or to hear a church service only within a curtained balcony. Such tsarevnas could not talk face to face with young men of their own kind. They could not marry.

Alexis had given his daughters intelligent tutors, books, and the best of servants. One of them, Sophia, had proved to be a brilliant pupil, although she was thickset and homely, silent and much given to writing diaries.

Perhaps Alexis sought in Natalia Naryshkin a vitality that he did not find in the terem which formed his home. At any rate, he contrived his marriage in the customary way, by bidding fifty-nine daughters of well-known boyars come before

him to be candidates for the "sovereign's delight." The sixtieth was Natalia. When the girls had been viewed for a day, and during their sleep at night, Alexis announced that Natalia would be the tsaritsa, his bride.

It is known of Natalia only that she was attractive and gay, loving entertainment, with a "small mind." Even as tsaritsa she continued to drive out in one of Matviev's European carriages with her face unveiled.

After his marriage Alexis indulged in wilder entertainment, to satisfy himself as well as Natalia. Not in the Kremlin but in his rambling summerhouse near the Yauza River he had a room fitted up with a stage, calling it the Room of Comedy, and upon the stage a spectacle performed by actors improvised from the foreign colony—German and Polish youths. Seated alone in front of the stage, with the women screened in the gallery, with elderly servants, attendant priests, and solemn diplomats ranged discreetly in chairs behind him, he watched from midmorning until dark such an unheard-of spectacle as "The Tsaritsa Judith Cuts Off the Head of the Tsar Holofernes."

Think for a moment of that picture, of the thickset impassive man with the tired wistful eyes sitting absorbed in a makeshift throne seat while a score of apprentices from the foreign colony—there were no other actors available—performed the old, old story of Judith. It is amusing, certainly, when you recall that the theater in Paris might be performing such an adult and satirical thing as Molière's *Le Malade Imaginaire*, while the Restoration comedies being played in England were more sophisticated stuff than William Shakespeare ever dreamed on.

Yet Alexis, the spectator, shared the craving of his people for music and movement. Far from Moscow and unhampered by the religious code, girls were dancing the *chorovod* under the cherry blossoms of the Ukraine, Volga rivermen were singing at their tow ropes. Villagers in the northern forests crowded to watch mummers and dancing bears.

Successful in its first endeavor, Alexis' Room of Comedy staged the story of Esther. The spectators had no trouble in identifying the young Natalia with Esther, and Alexis with

Ahasuerus ("Xerxes"). After that Alexis had conjurers and a chorus come into the dining hall during a feast. Cautiously, and enjoying himself in the process, he was bridging the gap between ancient Byzantine monasticism and the new ways of Europe.

Among the women who watched the entertainments from their screened galleries, there was silent strain. Natalia, now pregnant, had six stepdaughters, some of them older than she. Somewhere between these seven women and the two sickly boys would fall the regency of All of Rus on Alexis' death. Because it was not customary to do so, he had not yet announced his successor. When Natalia gave birth to a boy, and a healthy boy, the strain increased perceptibly. Although an infant, Peter seemed to have all his wits, while at least one of his half brothers was an idiot. Obviously some adult would need to serve as regent, but who would that adult be?

Because their Siberian exile had thinned out the male Romanovs, mutilating those who survived, Alexis remained the only competent man of the family. And the family ties were very strong in such a boyar family. The father ruled as master and archpriest, to whom servile obedience must be given. If this gosudar, this head of the family, should be disgraced or exiled, the family shared his fate.

In Alexis' time few of the ancient princely families survived intact. They had been decimated or removed from their estates by the inflexible anger of Ivan the Terrible; for nearly a century the higher posts of the empire-to-be had been filled by "men of the time" appointed by the tsar's will, as Alexis himself had just raised Matviev to boyar rank. Yet the families newly raised to be near the person of the tsar displayed just as much jealousy and sometimes more greed for gain than the children of Rurik, the lords of ancient Kiev, Vladimir, and Tver had shown in their time. Unlike the great nobility of Europe, these "men of the time" had no châteaux or castles of their own, sustained by ancestral lands and revenues. They dwelt for the most part in rambling houses squeezed into the White City, as close as possible to the Kremlin; they were sustained by awards from the Treasury. The scale of their sustenance was written down on the record of rank and privileges.

Alexis had ordered this record roll destroyed. But there were other records, and the families had excellent memories.

Of all the families, the two that had most at stake were the Miloslavskys—the kindred of the dead Maria and the six surviving daughters—and the obscure Naryshkins, who had thronged into Moscow after Natalia's marriage. By ancient



*Contemporary medallion*

Tsar Alexis and his second wife Natalia Naryshkin—parents of Peter

custom the kindred of a new tsaritsa received the posts closest to the person of the tsar. That custom dated back to the time when a gosudar's life and succession became more secure in the care of his children's kinsmen than in the hands of his own brothers and uncles, who might conceivably have a claim to the throne.

Perhaps because he remembered too well the popular outcry twenty-odd years before at the misconduct of some of the Miloslavskys whom he had made ministers, perhaps because he sought to change the old usage, Alexis had given the highest appointments to strangers who seemed to merit them, like Matviev.

So neither the Miloslavsky clan nor the Naryshkin family held posts of power close to Alexis. The heads of the two clans, both named Ivan, in fact, were kept at a distance from the Great Master. Obviously Alexis meant to balance the privilege and prestige of the rival families.

The consequence was only to postpone the reckoning. Alexis, a wise moderator, still possessed as tsar the full power of a despot; before his throne men prostrated themselves as they had done formerly before the Tatar khans.

To that power Sophia had grown accustomed, vicariously. It surrounded her with subservience, yet would forever be denied her. She could not even be given in marriage to someone of royal blood in a distant land, as was the fashion in Europe. As Tsarevna of Rus her lineage was held to be superior to pagan families of the west. She could only exist, robed and secluded, condemned to death-in-life.

The men who visited Sophia sat respectfully on the other side of the narrow hall, and hurried on to other duties. Simeon of Polotsk, the brilliant western scholar who tutored the sisters, wrote the dramas for the new Room of Comedy and intrigued Alexis with his poems and exhortations. Sophia had been his best pupil; she was too old for books now. Those shy monks of Kiev who discoursed in Latin and Greek had been set to work as masters of the new Academy.

Stolid and silent, Sophia permitted herself to be robed and disrobed in the cell-like chambers of the terem, often seeing but never sharing the life of the young mother, Natalia, who had to fear at worst only a mild reproof from Alexis.

Among the Miloslavsky clan and among Sophia's servants there began to be whispers that the newborn Peter brought ill omen to the family. So unlike a Romanov he was. "Who ever heard of a tsar's son named Peter? Ivan, Dmitri, Feodor—such are the rightful names of a tsar's son. Big, he is, and boisterous as a *German* or Tatar. Not like Ivan, not like Feodor!"

### *The First Favorites*

Ancient custom had made Alexis the head of another family numbering into the thousands. Always beyond the door,

whether he slept or prayed in an ikon corner, they waited patiently. Those who had the right to ascend the main stairway, the famous Red Stair of the palace, held themselves superior to others. Early in the morning the boyars so favored waited outside his sleeping chamber in full-length robes furred and embroidered, with their beards combed, to know if the Great Master would speak with them.

In the labyrinthian corridors, however, existed other throngs, impoverished shadows, pensioners often bearing famous names. They were "the upstairs poor" and Alexis nourished them for his soul's sake.

Actually, Alexis fed thousands daily in the many-columned dining hall of the terem—and by the dishes carried forth from the imperial kitchens to other dining halls. The dishes were carried by an army of stewards, scullions, sons of boyars—dishes heaped up with the produce of hundreds of orchards, wheat fields, and cellars belonging throughout the lands to Alexis himself. In a year the feasters at the tsar's tables alone would consume six hundred barrels of wine and honey mead.

This nourishing of a multitude was managed by the Bureau of the Great Court. The Bureau of Stables cared for the horse herds of the tsar. The Treasury kept count of his stocks of furs, silk, cloth of gold, silver, and jewels. His expenses were paid by the revenues of forty towns—there was no city the size of Moscow in all of Rus—and the taxes levied upon many trades in Moscow, such as the blacksmiths or the fishmongers.

Some thirty-seven of these bureaus functioned somehow or other, squeezed into the Kremlin. There was a Bureau of Brigands, and a Bureau of Secret Affairs. Generations passed with hardly a change in the bureaus—the newest of them being the Streletzky Prikaz (Musketeers), the Pushkarsky Prikaz (Artillery), and the Sibirsky Prikaz, all dating back more than half a century. For them, new taxes had been imposed.

Alexis' remedy for the age-old inertia of the Moscow bureaus had been to place new personalities over them. Few of these personalities had been Muscovites or wealthy men. Nikon, the brilliant patriarch of Rus, had been the son of a northern peasant, a devourer of books. Nikon had been driven and almost consumed by a fiery determination to bring order



into the ancient liturgy of the land, and he had ended by antagonizing the spirit of devout believers in the old, who held that by changing signs and words the impatient Nikon was attempting to alter ancient truth. Many of these Old Believers had forsaken the churches, taking congregations with them.<sup>6</sup>

No doubt this Nikon, who was guided by visions, had abused his power by striking his adversaries with terror. Yet Alexis supported his friend, who as patriarch was his only peer in the land. This support was not blindly given, for often Alexis had attempted, however timidly, to guide the man who should have been his spiritual guide. When Nikon, daringly, demanded that the body of Philip, a saint slain by the anger of Ivan the Terrible, should be transported from remote Solovetsky in the White Sea to the cathedral in Moscow, where dwelt Alexis as the successor to Ivan, the tsar did not object. Instead he wrote, carefully, a letter of propitiation to the murdered Philip: "I beg for thy presence here, that by it may be atoned the sin of my predecessor the Tsar Ivan. . . ."

And Nikon's intention of staging before the people a demonstration of penance to be imposed by him on the living tsar fell flat. Incensed, he complained bitterly of the unholy conduct of the boyars who formed his escort on this strange pilgrimage. Again Alexis wrote a letter, this time in gentle reproof to the man he venerated. In it he called the ambitious Nikon his "cherished friend and fellow in the yoke, guardian of my soul." As for the offending boyars, he pointed out, "If they were wise, you could reprove them; but to reprove foolish men is like treading on their corns . . . no one can be made to feel religion by force."

The man Alexis had selected to deal with foreign affairs was the most remarkable of this group of "yoke fellows." Athanasy Ordin Nastchokin came from the home of a clerk in Pskov, where he had learned German and Swedish and had accumulated a library—a rare achievement in the days when few could read the native Slavonic, and when "Polish and Latin writings" were banned intermittently by the Church. Athanasy, as Alexis called him, was that rarest of combinations, a natural diplomat of inflexible integrity. Not only did

he refuse to violate a word of a treaty agreed on, but he refused to let Alexis do so.

Although Athanasy thought as a Russian, and was wholeheartedly intent on bringing order into disordered Rus, he understood Europeans very well. While he worked for them, he criticized the Muscovites unmercifully, earning unpopularity for himself by so doing. Even more than Alexis, he sought the aid of western methods and new inventions such as astrolabes, quadrants, firearms, and above all shipping. Because he believed that the waterways from the Volga to the Baltic were the lifeline of Rus, he ventured to build himself something never seen before on the Volga, a seagoing brig with sails that could be set to make headway against the wind. By degrees he put a serviceable fleet into operation on the Volga and Caspian. (Ironically, his first brig, the *Orel* [*Eagle*] was burned by Stenka Razin at Astrakhan.)

To keep Alexis thinking about the west, Athanasy used to write out a daily gist of news for him to read, a primitive sort of newspaper.

Besides the Volga artery, Athanasy's other conviction was the advantage of enduring peace with Poland, then far superior to Muscovy in culture. He even insisted on the return of Kiev to Poland as promised in a treaty he had drawn. But Alexis, who had as keen a sense of heritage as Ivan the Terrible, would not hear to yielding up an ancient stronghold of Rus.

"Athanasy," he cried, "it's a sin to throw away even a portion of Orthodox bread."

He did not mean, of course, that his stubborn chancellor was throwing away hallowed bread. He meant that Orthodox believers dwelt in that city on the Dnieper, hallowed by memories. To Alexis' way of thinking, it would be a sin to disown them. Kiev was kept in spite of the treaty agreement.

Tired of public criticism, and unable to reconcile his conviction as a statesman with his master's religious zeal, Ordin Nastchokin resigned his heavy responsibility—as Nikon had resigned his strife-torn patriarchate—to retire to a monastery. It was then that Alexis called upon Matviev to be "guardian

of the sovereign seal"—in other words chancellor of the inchoate empire.

And Little Sergy, along with his other heavy responsibilities, took up the duty of educating Alexis, who was quite willing to read anything written in Slavonic. With the aid of Nicholas Spathary, a Greek, the following works were furnished Alexis: an account of the prophet Daniel; an outline of the marvels of arithmetic; a sketch of wisdom—*The seven sciences as revealed by the Muses*; a word picture of the great church of St. Sophia at Constantinople; *The Book of Basil*—an account of hero kings from the times of David and Nebuchadnezzar.

A pathetic reading list, you will think, for the Great Master of some millions of human beings. Yet it was a long step forward from the books of earlier tsars, which had been almost entirely prayers and liturgy. Little Sergy and Athanasy had talked with foreigners who had mastered Galileo's concept of an expanded universe and Descartes's theory of the human mind's assimilation of the new sciences. Together—for Alexis supported them stoutly—the "yoke fellows" were endeavoring to lift Russian minds out of the murk of Byzantine superstition. They were the first open sponsors of the new learning and they accomplished much because Alexis protected them.

These pioneers were trying to catch up with two centuries of lost time. Aware of the achievements of the Renaissance in Europe, and the still more rapid advances made during the seventeenth century, they understood only too well that the minds of the mass of Russians still held to a medieval pattern. In fact, Simeon of Polotsk caught the resemblance between Alexis and Francis I. And he wrote a spirited memorandum to his master, pointing out how that first modern king of France had relied upon wise men to advise him, and how he had led his people out of ignorance. "For what the sovereign loves, his people also will learn to love."

Alexis could understand that. If he could set his people an example! He made such prodigious gifts to all who came near him that the Treasury officials were at times troubled to find the gifts their master had promised to bestow; in the darkness

before Easter dawn Alexis made the round of the upstairs poor and the prisoners in the labyrinth of the Kremlin. With both hands he gave away presents.

He wanted to give back a portion of land to each peasant who labored as a state serf.

He was never able to meet many of the common folk face to face, and not many of the nobility imitated his piety. His "yoke fellows" remained a chosen few. By elevating them above the routine channels of government, he set a precedent for ill as well as good. They were the first of the great favorites who would play an increasingly important role in Russia.

### *Light from the West*

Troubled by the vicissitudes of his reign, Alexis was quite ready to believe that his own sins had brought misfortune on his head. Patiently he listened to the exhortations of Simeon Polotsk and even to the unknown preacher found in the Arctic and brought to Moscow by one of the Stroganovs. This stalwart preacher, instead of voicing the familiar sayings of prophets and saints, stormed at those "bound to gold and carriages and serfs . . . full of words when ye are full of wine at a pothouse, and silent as if speechless before Christ . . . laboring to please men, herding together like stinking goats."

Alexis had no wish, or could not bring himself, to break with the continuity of the past. It seemed to him that the folk of Rus must hold to old beliefs and faith while learning something of the new science of the west. Although he wore the time-honored regalia himself, he allowed men in European dress—even in wigs—to come before him. One of his "yoke fellows" built a monastery on the Kiev road. Here a score of Kiev monks had the perpetual task of teaching other languages to all who asked to be taught.

Then there was "the strange Serb," Krijanich, who came to Moscow to learn, and who remained to teach. Krijanich, a Catholic priest educated in Rome, had a vision of a united Slavdom, and had journeyed to Moscow because he felt that the tsar had the *power* to join together the scattered Slavs—"those upon the Danube, and those who are Poles . . . op-

pressed by strangers, with the German yoke upon their necks."

Yet after dwelling in Moscow, Krijanich exclaims in anger, ". . . never was dominion so oppressive as this of the Muscovites! . . . let the tsar give command to close the offices and shops that are not blessed by learning and understanding!"

It is not of Alexis that Krijanich complains but of the overbearing manners and ignorance of the Muscovites, with their barbaric clothing and armies of household serfs. "You can't even spit on your plate without a servant hurrying to take it away . . . their clothes make you stow your handkerchief in your hat, your money in your mouth, your knife and papers in the tops of your boots . . . truly in no other land is such drunkenness to be found as here, where women and priests as well as men are found wallowing in the mud of the streets, and sometimes dead."

Reading this—he is believed to have read all books published in Slavonic up to his day—Alexis must have bethought him of the evening when he felt very joyful with his boon companions, when he ordered German organs and trumpets to be played, and had to be helped back to his bed after he finished his wine.

Probably Sophia read Krijanich's book. At least we know that a copy was owned by the handsome young Vasily Galitzin, who did not drink himself under the table, who spoke Latin fluently and sometimes talked with Sophia. Vasily Galitzin was not at all like a timid monk of Kiev.

Childlike in his zeal, Krijanich pointed out the barbarism of the Muscovites because he hoped they might raise themselves out of barbarism, and because *unless they did so* he saw no hope for his united Slavdom. He pointed out the way to that unity, through mutual education and understanding. Unless understanding could be gained, he felt that nothing could be accomplished. In one of his sentences lies the key to mutual relations among the Slavic peoples and between them and the western Europeans. "The Slav fears," Krijanich wrote, "what he does not understand."

Krijanich of course was not one of the fellowship centered

in Alexis, working patiently toward enlightenment from the west. But like them he had stepped forth from Byzantine stagnation. Neither Alexis nor Sophia, the "brilliant pupil," had forsaken Byzantine customs, but they had begun to admire western thought. With Krijanich they were looking toward the west to remedy the ills of Muscovy.

After the publication of his book—and possibly after the discovery that he had been ordained a Roman priest—the vitriolic Krijanich was given a comfortable pension and sent to live in Tobolsk.

### *Alexis Asks a Blessing*

The affair of the Danzig book did not end so happily. It came out of the childishness of the Ambassadors' Bureau (before Nastchokin). That bureau had begun to ask for things unaccountable to minds in the west, beyond the invisible Riga-Constantinople line. Once the bureau asked for the loan of a Baltic port like Revel (Tallinn) because Muscovy had no proper port on a navigable sea. Surprised, the Baltic envoys replied that it would be better for the Muscovites to use their own port of Archangel, in the Arctic waters. There the matter rested for the time being.

The Danzig book came into prominence because the bureau and the Razriad wanted war with the Polish republic, which was then in one of its sinking spells. The Ukraine played a part in this plan. But Alexis, who was still young, wanted to regain Smolensk, the beautiful city on the Dnieper at the western gate of Moscow. There were Orthodox shrines in Smolensk. The book, it seems, was to serve as the pretext for the war.

Published in Latin, the book contained a portrait of a Polish king with the caption, "He subdued Muscovy." It also described the Muscovites in unflattering terms. So the Muscovite ambassador at Warsaw pointed out that it was an affront to the honor of the present tsar to assert in print that his predecessor had been subdued by a king of Poland.

The diplomats at Warsaw explained, more amused than alarmed, that no one in Warsaw had had a hand in publishing

the offending volume. "Here in Poland," they added, "all kinds of books are printed, and they say what they like. For that matter, you can publish what you like about us, in Moscow. If it is amusing we'll laugh, but we won't call you to account for it."

Still, the envoys of Muscovy insisted that the tsardom had been injured, and that only the return of the frontier towns granted to the Polish king of the portrait would redress the injury of the words "he subdued Muscovy."

Baffled, the Poles retorted that no one in Moscow seemed to have sense enough to read Latin with understanding. "Those words penned by a eulogist don't *mean* anything!"

This the Muscovites would not believe, at least officially. They countered with an ultimatum. The offending chapter must be torn out of the Danzig book and burned in public by the official hangman. The Poles, no longer amused, answered that it was nonsense to think they could go through such an act of public disgrace; but to satisfy the Muscovites the offending chapter could be burned in private. The Muscovites were not satisfied, and the Poles at last burned the pages in the market place at Warsaw.

In spite of that, war was declared later by the Razriad. Behind the argument over the book lay the age-old difference in mentality of two peoples. To the cultured Poles the tsar often seemed to be a funny man or a cruel monster; to the Muscovites the tsar, however sickly or deficient, personified their heritage of divine protection and mundane power.

To Alexis this war was not so much an adventure as a sacred duty. The Muscovite generals commanding were summoned into his presence for his blessing, and he at least took seriously the ancient words "greater love hath no man" . . . with tears he urged the commanders to pray and to show mercy to those under them, as if caring for their own souls; at the cathedral with his own hand he gave the sacramental cup to the generals, one after the other. The "Decree to the Generals" or written plan of campaign was laid upon the altar, under the ikon, before being handed by Alexis to his officers.

And apparently Alexis had inserted something very unusual

in this plan. Instead of making war in the usual way, it seemed, these voevodes were to cross the frontier and march into Poland without any attempt at destruction. They were to march armed but bearing a message of peace, doing no injury to people or to fields, merely summoning walled towns to open their gates.

Whether this humanitarian aspect of invasion actually had an effect, or whether the Muscovite armies were too powerful in numbers to be resisted at first, the result was that border towns like Smolensk did open their gates without resistance.

That happy state of affairs did not continue long. The march-through became a savage conflict which lasted intermittently for thirteen years, ending only with the loss of two Muscovite armies entire. Blessing and prayer at the cathedral had not enabled the Muscovite generals to prevail through the new quality of mercy or to remain victorious, although Alexis had broken tradition a second time by visiting the encampments in person.

Urged by Nastchokin, Alexis agreed to a lasting peace with the Poles—but he kept Kiev.

However, Alexis had set a precedent. The unfortunate generals who did not achieve success through prayer were all Russians. So were the "yoke fellows" chosen by Alexis, usually from the middle class. No foreigner was appointed to be the head of any activity. Alexis' generals were often advised, for good or ill, by foreign officers, but the command lay in their hands. He wanted his Russians to learn by experience, while they were advised by foreigners. And that was what they did.

Meanwhile the Muscovite state rested upon the edge of an abyss. Alexis, aware of that, felt almost powerless to strengthen the government of which he was the despotic head. He was only the second Romanov; his dynasty had endured little longer than his own lifetime. Yet already, in his middle age, he felt that his dynasty was failing.

The abyss, stretching from the outmost earth wall of Moscow to the far west, separated his people from the progressive



minds of the west. When, two centuries before in the time of the third Ivan, the first visitors from the west had found the Muscovites backward and uncouth, the gap between the visitors and the dwellers on the Moskva had been slight, easy to close. Now it had grown greater because the westerners had advanced while the Muscovites had stood still.

And now his people were becoming conscious of that abyss. So many of them had seen and felt with their hands the better foreign coins, carriages, seagoing ships, and medicines. The firelocks from Sweden, the woolen cloth from England, the pewter, the "iron implements." And something momentous was happening. His people were losing confidence in "ancient usage." True, they held stubbornly to the past; they would not change ancient ways, but they were becoming uncertain and afraid. Too often had Alexis heard "the outcry of the people."

He knew the reason for that. The Muscovite state could not meet the needs of the new empire, of All of Rus, stretching to Yakutsk, and to Astrakhan and Archangel. Muscovy had grown up as a city, feeding upon the adjacent riverlands; now the central power of an empire of land, it still fed itself, drawing taxes, furs, timber, grain, and all the stuff of human needs out of its expanding lands. Its voevodes fed themselves from its far provinces. The mechanism of the bureaus only served to draw sustenance toward Moscow; there existed no mechanism to aid the far lands.

In its inertia the Muscovite government had found no means to send supplies to the famine area of the Ukraine, or to check the ravage of the plague, although it checked the Volga uprisings with the guns of its Streltsi.

It was the greatness of Alexis Romanov that he could realize this, and start his people toward change. Like them he would not depart from the ancient way of life. You could not, it seemed, take a step from the year 1473 into the year 1673. No, you would have to take your first step from the old standing ground. Had not the inspired Nikon started by changing the incoherent, misspelled prayer books? But Nikon had gone too far—he had struck at the core of old belief, and men had fled from the churches. The ancestors of the Stroga-

novs had managed an empire in the Urals; now a Stroganov dwelt in a town house across the Red Place, and spoke Polish, traveling to Vienna, even. But he had found an Arctic preacher for the good of his soul. You couldn't destroy the *core* of such men to teach them new ways.

Athanasy had not craved his new model ships merely to imitate the European shipping of this day; he had wanted to carry commerce out of the old river routes into the blue Caspian, or around to the Mediterranean. Otherwise Russian goods would have to be loaded forever on Dutch or French or English merchant craft. Andreas Vinius, the clever Dutch planner, had helped build that new fleet for the Caspian. Afterward they had sent Vinius to the magnificent French court, where the glib Frenchmen had mocked him, asking what kept the Muscovites so long from Christian courts. Vinius answered, "Distance, and the will of the Almighty."

When Alexis Romanov was divested of his regalia at night to sleep, he dismissed the upstairs poor who sat around him to recite their minstrels' tales, and sometimes he played the musical box, the gift of Little Sergy Matviev. He fed all who came to his tables, charming them with his manner; he gave away his enormous individual wealth, while he waited for the day when the children, the boy and the newborn girl, of his young wife should be educated in the western way. Then he died quietly, when the Kremlin was snowbound in January 1676, after naming the sickly Feodor his successor.

## THE YOUNG WESTERNERS

*Weakness of the Throne*

FEODOR was fourteen and half dead. At his coronation he had to be supported by the arm of Ivan Miloslavsky. With the great courage of an invalid, who seeks for nothing for himself, he tried to rule as his father had done—seeking the knowledge of the west. Like Alexis, he abolished the archaic Table of Ranks and welcomed about him men of questing mind who had shaved off their beards.

Yet he was handicapped by the ambitions of the Miloslavsky clan, and the lack of an able minister.

It was the weakness of the Kremlin that it had no power to act except by the will of those closest to the throne. Matviey suggested the appointment of the much younger Peter, who would undoubtedly survive the ailing Feodor; but Little Sergy was bound to the Naryshkin fortunes; he was exiled beyond the Urals on a charge of witchcraft, having in his possession such unblest objects as musical boxes and incantations in Latin. Natalia and her son Peter were forbidden to remain in the Kremlin.

Feodor showed the courage in him, and the impress of his education—refusing to be greeted servilely as the “Great Master” and having alphabet books made for the use of children, and the rudiments of a university established in a monastery, to teach Polish and ciphering. Perhaps at Sophia’s urging he made Vasily Galitzin a boyar—who was to be known as the “Great Galitzin.” What Feodor could not undertake himself, he trusted this brilliant student to do for him. Thus favored, Galitzin made no bones about breaking precedents.

Sophia, now past her twentieth year, broke precedent also in coming among the attendants of the bedchamber to nurse Feodor, whose life meant to her the opportunity to break the long immurement of the terem and to grasp the power that she sensed for the first time after Alexis' death. But Feodor lived only six years, despite Sophia's nursing.

No children survived him. He had taken one wife, with all the customary Byzantine ceremonial. She had died after giving birth to a son christened Dmitri—one of the many Dmitris who seemed to perish by some fatality as children in the shadow of the Kremlin—who also died. Another woman had married this young tsar, with his flesh rotting away. No issue survived.

### *Calling in of the Streltsi*

Perhaps the family as a whole mourned the high-spirited Feodor. The survivors were young for the most part, and intelligent enough. Like the favored Great Galitzin, they liked to live in rooms made comfortable with Polish settees, cabinets, and wall mirrors; they preferred that men should shave off the old-fashioned beards and wear short European clothing instead of the cumbersome oriental robes. In short, they desired innovations rather than the primitive procedure of Russian life to which Alexis had adhered outwardly.

Perhaps, feeling so, they understood that it did not matter greatly which child was robed, to sit on the throne, or what woman held the greatest prestige because of that. Viewed from within the Kremlin, the tsardom seemed immutable as the massive walls themselves. The great bell tolled the death of Feodor—the Vyestnik, the Summoner—as it had tolled for other tsars before the Romanovs.

At its summons boyars and passers-by gathered in the space before the cathedral, and when the patriarch, Joachim, asked the throng who should be named to succeed Feodor, the crowd answered readily, "Peter, the son of Alexis." So they had been instructed to answer by the messengers of the patriarch who had discussed that point with the heads of the most prominent families the night before. Since Peter was only nine

years old, his mother Natalia was named regent also, to sponsor him. Neither Peter nor his mother had been seen much in the Kremlin the last few years; they were merely acceptable names to be repeated. The tsardom would be as it had been before, managed by the family, the patriarch, and the great boyar heads like Dolgoruky and Sheremet'ev. Besides, the populace had a liking for the boy and his handsome young mother, upon whom the blessing of the good Alexis appeared to rest.

There was consternation during the last service for Feodor in the cathedral when the Tsarevna Sophia entered escorted by Simeon of Polotsk and a group of monks. No imperial princess had appeared at such a service before—only the widow, among the women, might appear before the public at such a time. Natalia was there, with Peter. And after a while Natalia rose and left, before the service had ended. Sophia remained.

The tension between the two women only reflected the tension between the Miloslavsky and Naryshkin clans. During Feodor's short rule the Miloslavskys, headed by Ivan, had taken for themselves the most important posts, such as control of the Treasury. Now that Natalia was regent and the "European" Matviev had been recalled to take charge of affairs the Miloslavskys feared that they would be torn away from the throne and exiled. They confided their fears to Sophia, and to officers of the Streltsi, the garrison of Moscow.

To these same officers Sophia and Ivan Miloslavsky confided that now was an opportune time for them to assert their grievances against the Naryshkins, and by so doing obtain greater pay and privileges from the Miloslavskys.

When Matviev drove into Moscow at last in his carriage, some of the Streltsi warned him that there would be a rising against the new regime of Natalia—"of that she-bear and her cub." Matviev hardly listened, saying, "I can take care of any such rising."

The experienced diplomat remembered only the Moscow he had known under Alexis. When he satisfied himself that rumors had been circulated by the Miloslavsky group that the life of the idiot Ivan, brother of Feodor, was in danger

under Natalia, he summoned the Guard regiment of Streltsi to the palace, and showed them Ivan with Natalia and the boy Peter at the head of the Red Stair. "You see," he argued, "the life of no one is threatened by us."

The Streltsi of that day had been long at peace, their sole duty that of guarding Moscow, the Kremlin, and the imperial inmates of the Kremlin. Formed under Ivan the Terrible, and armed with firelocks, in that early effort to create a trained standing army, the fourteen thousand "musketeers" occupied the Suburb of the Streltsi, while the two thousand of the Guard regiment manned the Kremlin gates—all of them privileged beyond other Muscovites in that they paid no taxes, and could engage in trade for themselves while drawing sustenance pay. In consequence most of them, married and quartered comfortably, spent more time in the market places than in drill, and had a lively interest in the affairs of the Treasury as well as in their own Streltsi Bureau. They had become a latter-day Praetorian Guard, nourishing some very real grievances against voevodes who had tampered with their pay.

Having lost touch with the situation and the mood of the guardsmen, Matviev did not realize until too late that they had come to the palace with the intention of killing the stronger leaders of the Naryshkin group, of levying tribute on the Treasury, and of gaining for themselves a voice in the orders issued from this throne held by women and children.

One of their own colonels, a Dolgoruky, was the first to be thrown from the head of the stair, upon the pikes of the Streltsi below. Then they gripped Matviev, who held frantically to the nine-year-old Peter. Tearing him from the boy, the soldiers cut and slashed him until he died. Catching up Peter, Natalia ran back into the living quarters of the tsars.

For three days, while the bells tolled high on the tower of Ivan the Terrible, the Streltsi held the Kremlin approaches and purged the city with blood. For three generations such bloodshed had not been seen within the gates. The Streltsi had prepared a death list, in which Naryshkins and voevodes of the Streltsi figured largely—the property of the condemned to be confiscated by the government, and 240,000 rubles of

back pay, so said the Streltsi, to be turned over to them. Natalia ordered a payment made, but refused, weeping, to surrender her brother Ivan Naryshkin, who had been named head of the Streltsi Bureau. "Do you want all of us to suffer," demanded Sophia, "to protect him?"

The head of the Naryshkin clan was delivered up with the others to be tortured—among them a foreigner, a German naturalist who had been found with snakes preserved in alcohol in his workroom.

One thing is clear. Among those around the throne only Sophia had a clear plan to pursue, and on that plan she insisted. The cloistered tsarevna now talked openly with committees from the soldiery, who in turn petitioned the council of boyars and prelates that assembled under the eyes of the Streltsi. At the end of a week Sophia had obtained every point she demanded, as the only competent adult among the descendants of Alexis. And every point served to humiliate the despairing Natalia.

All Naryshkins were to be exiled, including Peter, who remained tsar in name yet with the imbecile Ivan "sovereign tsar"—that is, Peter's superior. Until the boys came of age, Sophia was to be Regent of Rus. The Streltsi were paid off, and pacified by the fine-sounding title of "Guard of the Great Court," while a column was erected in the adjoining Red Place to honor their achievement in disposing of the Naryshkins.

Outside the walls of Moscow little was known of this, and less heeded. Certain personalities had shifted about the throne, and a new monument had appeared in the Red Place. But the bureaus remained as before, and taxes were levied without change.

Still, two things had happened, because of the ambition of the unwise Miloslavskys and the determination of Sophia, that would have a latent effect on Muscovy. The old-line soldiery had seized a strategic position that they would not be allowed to hold, and a nine-year-old boy had been frightened to the core by the murder of his companions.

*The Ghosts of the Tatar Khans*

Some ten years before then, during the last years of Alexis, the eyes in the Kremlin had shifted perceptibly toward the far east. In the west a firm peace had been made with Poland as Nastchokin so long desired. Alexis himself became interested in the neglected eastern gateway of Rus for a number of reasons. The value of the fur intake from Siberia was falling steadily just at the time when trade could be resumed with Europe through Bryansk and the Baltic shore. Also Chernigovsky's strange republic was making overtures to the Siberisky Prikaz, from the Amur which might well be made the waterway to the Eastern Ocean Sea.

It was then that the great trade caravan was made up, to embark on the long transcontinental journey to Peking, to discover that Chinese merchants would pay four times the value of ermine and Arctic fox and even gray squirrel skins. It would be only a short haul from the eastern Siberian ostroms to Chinese markets. The Chinese merchants had tea and other desirable things to sell, but above all they had silk, which was fancied by the Muscovites and craved by Europeans.

The Siberian Bureau wanted more Chinese silk. Acting as always by imperial decree—Alexis being by far the greatest merchant in the land—the bureau forbade private trade in the finer furs, and proclaimed silk a monopoly of the state, while it sent a voevode to assume command on the Amur. And it became very curious about the still mysterious China. Was China so strongly defended by its Great Wall? Of what, exactly, did the strength of China consist? Could the eastern gateway of Rus be pushed around or through the Great Wall?

Very vividly in Muscovite minds lingered the memory of the great Tatar khans who had ruled Asia, and especially of Batu Khan of the Golden Horde who had ruled Muscovy. In their thrust across the north of the continent, the Muscovites had been following the old roads of the Tatars; they had come upon Mongol shrines and even upon surviving Mongols beyond the Holy Lake (Baikal). These ghosts were very real



to them. The more superstitious among them believed in treasures of gold and jewels hidden away in the east, and in some secret of power possessed by the men of the east. They knew the Chinese emperor as the Bogdikhan (Heavenly-great Khan) and Peking as Khanbaligh (City of the Khan). For some reason inexplicable to Europeans, the Siberian Bureau, the Razriad, and the Bureau of Ambassadors held all far eastern affairs to be secret. Maps of the eastern coast and routes thither could not be shown to foreigners. Such maps named China "Kitai," Cathay.

And now the ghosts of the ancient Tatars had materialized in the Manchu Tatars of the unknown north who had passed over the Amur and through the Great Wall, to conquer "Cathay."

### *Journal of Nicholas Spathary*

In 1674, with the revival of their interest in the Amur and China, the bureaus selected a very shrewd man to send as envoy to the court of the new khan. He was a foreigner, Nicholas Spathary, chief interpreter for the Razriad—a Greek who had emerged from the Balkans with his nose clipped for treachery, and with a truly amazing command of languages (being known in Europe as the "polyglot man").

Matviev must have had great confidence in Spathary, because he gave him credentials as ambassador and boyar (instead of interpreter of the War Office), and briefed him about what was known of the lands around China, including "the island in the sea rich in gold and silver called Yapon [Japan]."

Spathary's added instructions make curious reading. He was to "find out by all means, positively, whether in future there would be friendship and intercourse between His Majesty the Tsar and the Chinese Bogdikhan; also by what territories . . . and nomad lands it would be best to go, from Siberia to China . . . and how far it is from town to town, from tribe to tribe, in versts or days?"

More than that, the talented Greek was to investigate possible water routes, and what manner of transport was used along the different routes. "And especially what princes rule

along these routes, of what peoples, and do they ill-treat cosacks and traders, or do they pay tribute to His Majesty? . . . Also what are their occupations? As to all this, he is to make personal inquiry by every means of all people, and get at the whole truth. He must write down everything with the greatest accuracy, point by point, describing the entire Chinese empire.

"And in general he, Nicholas, whether in China or on the way thither, is to further in all ways His Majesty's interests . . . also to seek everywhere to put forward His Majesty's name, and to speak in such manner as may serve to exalt the honor of His Majesty."

Now these are not general instructions to a full-powered ambassador; they are *orders* given to an agent. The orders even extend to Spathary's return, since they bid him return by the same route to Moscow, where he is to present himself at a certain office before Matviev and the chief secretaries of the bureau, with all his data written down, his routes study carefully outlined, and his key map drawn. In terms of today, this astute factotum of the Muscovite Foreign Office was to journey to the Chinese court under cover as ambassador, to make a strategical survey of all routes into China, to report as an espionage agent on the new Manchu administration—besides carrying on propaganda for Moscow, and the power of the tsar.

But no one man could carry out all those orders. While Nicholas Spathary, the "polyglot man," might have attempted to do so on a mission to the Turks at Constantinople or to the Austrians at Vienna, he could not do so in this case because he knew neither the Mongolian nor the Manchu-Chinese languages.

No, on their face the briefing from Matviev and the orders written out by the bureau secretaries do not make sense. Yet Little Sergy was experienced in foreign affairs. And if we read between the lines, the directives do make sense.

Remember that neither Alexis nor Matviev had any first-hand knowledge of All of Rus east of the Volga. In this year of 1674 they had shifted their interest from the familiar west to the almost unknown east. Unmistakably in doing so Mat-

view, if not Alexis, had found his Siberian Bureau untrustworthy, its records misleading (in his own briefing of Spathary he describes Mongol princes as "tribute payers to His Majesty" whereas the Mongols at that time were quite open in their defiance of Muscovite authority; yet while Matviev is mistaken in the information he must have had from the bureau, he is correct enough in his information about the islands south of China which were known to Dutch traders, and which might have been described to Matviev by Andreas Vinius—who evidently had Alexis' confidence because he served as ambassador to the French court).

Also Matviev must have been dissatisfied with the results of previous embassies to Peking. Evidently he and Alexis wanted urgently to discover whether the seemingly rich empire of the Manchus could be invaded with the force at their disposal, or whether they must fall back upon a trade relationship, and if so of what kind. So Matviev refused to send another voevode of the Sibirsky Prikaz to the east, relying instead upon a man who had no tie-up with the bureau, and instructing him carefully to have his reports written before re-entering the Kremlin, and to report *in person* to Matviev as well as the bureau secretaries.

Apparently Spathary was to report upon the actual condition of the great dominion in the east, which the inefficient bureau had kept shrouded in mystery. An examination of his letters sent back to Moscow show that he did exactly that, for his journal begins at the Volga crossing and was dispatched piecemeal to Matviev and Alexis.

Spathary satisfied himself, taking a long time on the way to do so, that the Amur offered the only water route to China—"for the two great streams [Hoang-ho and Yangtze] that flow through China south of Peking have their sources in the deserts where the Mongols dwell and the Kalmuks."

On the Amur itself he pointed out where a fort could be built to control the river so "the Chinese would be unable to bring ships into the Amur."

The overland routes he listed carefully, actually including some known only to the Jesuit missionaries whom he met in Peking. But even inland, knowing the Russian dependence on

waterways, he pointed out where boats could get through. His seventh land route started from Baikal into the hazardous Mongol highlands via water to Lake Dalai (Great Lake)—“on the shore of Dalai a fort might be built . . . which might be reached by boats. There, too, can be found tin and silver, for old workings are to be seen and the natives say the ores are there even now. When we were in Selenginsk Fort [the ostrog pushed south of Baikal only six years before] we sent people for purposes of trade and to explore that road . . . with pack animals the journey takes six weeks; riding, it can be done in three. Even if entry were refused to Peking itself, one could still trade outside the Wall in the watch-guard town [Kalgan]. In any case, Selenginsk cossacks have been sent . . . to find out all about this road.”

Spathary drew his exhaustive findings from the frontier guards, from traders returning from the Great Wall, from Mongol envoys, but seldom if ever from the voevodes of the bureau.

From the terminal town of Yeniseisk he wrote to Matviev: “This Yenisei country, my lord, is very fine, reminding me of Wallachia—and the Yenisei River of the Danube, a very great river and a merry one. And God has given abundance of corn . . . and population.”

To Alexis, from the same town: “. . . I sought out there Your Majesty’s cossacks and the trader Gavril Romanov who not many days since arrived from China by way of Your Majesty’s Selenginsk fort. The traders told me, Your Majesty’s humble servant . . . that in Khanbaligh Russian deserters told them secretly that if there were two thousand of Your Majesty’s regular soldiers beyond Baikal at the present time, it would be possible to bring into subjection under Your Majesty’s high hand not only all the land beyond Baikal immediately but all the land right up to the Great Wall of China—the Bogdikhan being extremely weak, mightily afraid of the cossacks, and greatly upset with his war with the Chinese of the south.”

Now that is a piece of good intelligence—except for the suggestion that the Manchu emperor had any fear of cossacks.

In that year (1675) the Manchu armies had suffered defeats in the south, and were in danger of collapse.

Spathary found and questioned Mongol envoys in Yenisei—"two from the Khutukhta Lama, their high priest, the head of their religion as far as India." And in his epistle to Matvieiev he added: "The Mongols are mightily afraid of the cossacks. And I seem to see, if Providence but wills it, the fear of God and of the great Tsar fall upon the heathen of these countries, so that they shall flee when no man pursueth! When I reach the frontier, I shall see . . . what sort of population and armament they have."

This is special pleading of course. Aware that his great sponsors desired to press toward China, Spathary was pointing out encouraging signs to them. At the frontier he had a following of a hundred and fifty "cossacks and other people, all being chosen men and well qualified" for the ostensible purpose of building monasteries and churches—actually he was sending out exploring parties over a wide territory along the mystery-ridden frontier.

At Albazin he noted for Alexis' attention: "The Albazin cossacks serve Your Majesty with the greatest zeal. . . . Between them, however, and the Nerchinsk voevode [at the nearest frontier post] quarrels have arisen because they refused to accept a certain Tobolsk boyar's son sent by him to rule over them, as this man wanted to establish a kabak and other unworthy things in the fort. They begged him [i.e., the voevode] to give them an experienced Trans-Baikal cossack as chief, but he would not. . . . The voevodes before my arrival told the cossacks to say nothing of this affair to me."

He had no way of knowing—because it took at least two years to send a dispatch from the frontier to Moscow and receive an answer—that Alexis had died and Matvieiev been sent into exile. His last reports were being opened by the secretaries of the bureau itself!

To the Chinese officers at the first frontier post, Spathary stated blandly that he had been sent "by the desire of His Majesty the Tsar to maintain neighborly relations and friendship with their master the Bogdikhán."

In Peking Spathary was received with very keen suspicion. He was kept waiting in the "hickory palisade," which seems to have been the rude quarters to which Russians were confined. The Manchu officials in that time of stress wanted to examine closely this curious envoy of the "Urous Khakhan" or Great Khan of Rus, who might be either a useful friend or a potential enemy. And Spathary proved to be a match for Chinese guile.

In Moscow he had been given a duplicate set of papers, identifying him as a general factotum or agent instead of the ambassador he had claimed to be. When the Manchus refused to receive him as ambassador from a monarch equal to K'ang hsi, the Greek presented his alternate set of papers, and gained a hearing. And, although confined to his quarters in Peking, he brought out with him a very fine description of the Chinese Empire. Not until very recently have scholars identified this as, nearly word for word, the account already published by one of the Jesuits at Peking and undoubtedly shown Spathary by Father Verbiest, who befriended him there!

Nor were the Chinese entirely deceived by this inexplicable ambassador-agent. Years later K'ang hsi, in a message to Peter, complained of "the very perverse conduct of Mikolai who formerly came from his kingdom." "Mikolai" must have been the brilliant Nicholas.

Spathary got back safely to Moscow after three years, with his mass of valuable intelligence. Without his patron Matviev he was rudely treated by the Sibirsky Prikaz—closely interrogated, and reduced to service as ordinary interpreter, on half allowance. Nor was he permitted, it seems, to leave Moscow again.

Look back for a moment at the group to which Spathary had belonged before his disgrace, at the group of "yoke fellows" gathered around Alexis—Nikon, Athanasy Ordin Nastchokin, Little Sergy Matviev, Simeon Polotsk the student, Andreas Vinius the merchant-adventurer. They had been pioneers of a new movement, to change the ancient usage of Rus gradually to western ways. They had made vital beginnings. After them, it was impossible to *ignore* the west.

But they had been able to start in a new direction only the educated minds within Moscow itself.

Shipments of political exiles to Siberia increased after the suppression of the Volga revolt, because influential families were being uprooted and sent to the eastern katorgas. These families had to join in the labor of the settlements, not so much because they had been condemned to labor as from the necessity of sustaining life.

And like the earlier conquistadors of the Chernigovsky type some of these Ukrainians assumed leadership in the new land.

### *What Father Gerbillon Witnessed*

Almost as soon as the regency of Sophia Romanov began in Moscow, a new personality made itself felt beyond the Urals. The Great Galitzin, her lover and favorite, tried to improve transportation by extending the yam, or post-road chain, farther east to Yeniseisk, and by building a log road thither across the marshy steppe. To do this he impressed the families of exiles, which could not easily desert a post and disappear into the wilderness.

After a while, in 1688, another new person with authority appeared in the far east. Feodor Golovin, unlike Galitzin, knew something about the east because he was the son of a former voevode of Tobolsk, and he brought authority, as envoy, to agree with the Manchu government as to the actual Russian frontier, and the trade between the two nations.

Moscow's latent interest in its eastern gateway had been stirred by Spathary's report, by the success of the great trade caravan of '74, by the finding of silver and zinc around Selenginsk (where Spathary had noticed outcroppings of ores), and by persistent rumors of the growing power of the Manchus.

With that power Russian detachments infiltrating down the Amur corridor had come into ever sharper collision. Russians who had reoccupied and fortified Albazin, the key to the Amur, were promptly encircled by Chinese troops. Golovin, a good diplomat, was expected to secure possession of the Amur by treaty—to gain access to the sea and to the Manchu

territories. (Spathary had advised the eastern voevodes to withdraw from the Amur, but they paid him no attention.)

For the first time the Muscovites were to sit down with ambassadors from Peking to draw a treaty between the nations—in fact the first treaty between Europeans and the people of the far east.

Father Jean François Gerbillon, one of the Jesuits then in the Peking mission, had been asked by K'ang hsi to go along to enable his ambassadors to speak with the strange Muscovites. Gerbillon was well aware that the formidable border peoples, the Mongols and the Buriats, had claimed the protection of K'ang hsi. The Manchus, having got their house in order within China proper, were planning to push the edge of their dominion westward through mid-Asia past Tibet—the region Spathary had noted as being unexplored.

Golovin, who had only his year-old instructions from the bureau at Moscow to guide him, hardly understood all that. But he had sharp evidence of it on his journey out, when a flood of leather-clad horsemen surrounded him at Selenginsk, cutting him off from communication with the outer world.

These horsemen were actually a "wing," the east Kalmuk wing, of the Mongols, acting on advice from Peking. Penned in the stockaded citadel of the town behind their cannon, the Russians saw only elusive riders armed with bows so powerful that their arrows pierced through the bodies of the garrison. Their long matchlocks, aimed from a rest, could kill a man at four hundred yards.

When the siege tightened around Selenginsk, the prisoners were let out of the *katorga* to aid the garrison. Among them happened to be Mogogrishny, a Cossack hetman of the Ukraine, whose family had been exiled with him. Accustomed to Tatar tactics, the Ukrainian took command, brought the Muscovite soldiery out of the stockade to entrenchments in the open, stopped the slaughter of the inhabitants, and eventually drove off the Kalmuks, thereby setting free the envoy of the tsar.

When the massive procession of the Muscovite envoys entered the border town of Nerchinsk to face the equally impos-



ing cortege of the Chinese camped across the river, Father Gerbillon found the task confronting him to be both difficult and delicate. The Manchu *Ta-jin* or ambassadors wearing the gold-embroidered dragons represented the Son of Everlasting Heaven, who admitted no other monarch to be his equal, while the Muscovites in satin and furs held no less an honor to belong to the Great Master of Rus. Moreover the Chinese had reinforced their diplomacy with a small field army kept discreetly in their rear, while the Muscovites, no whit more trustful, had the cannon of Nerchinsk at their backs.

Father Gerbillon had to do a deal of parleying off the record with the solitary Pole who could speak, in Latin, for Golovin and his party. He worked out a way for the dignitaries to meet without loss of face or fighting power. Since neither party would enter the quarters of the other, two pavilions were set up facing each other on the Nerchinsk bank of the river. Into one of these pavilions the Muscovites paraded with two hundred and sixty guards, with trumpets, drums, and bagpipes, sounding. Golovin came mounted, wearing over gold brocade a sable coat "worth a thousand crowns at Peking," Gerbillon estimated.

Chagrined by this display, the *Ta-jin* crossed the river and entered the facing pavilion with no more pomp than umbrellas carried before them, but with two hundred and sixty guards. In fact they nearly ended the negotiations by keeping an armed reinforcement at the boats behind them. Gerbillon and the Polish exile adjusted this interference with the balance of power. The proceedings began by both Muscovites and *Ta-jin* waiting, stubbornly seated, for the other side to speak first.

Both sides uttered compliments freely, to draw the other out. Not until late in the day did Golovin, who had placed a fine *watch*—Father Gerbillon admired it—on the table by him, get down to business by suggesting that the wide Amur was designed by nature to be an ideal boundary between states, and so the Russians would agree to keep to the north side of this river, even as far as the sea.

To this the Chinese rejoined—explaining themselves to Gerbillon, who interpreted to the Pole, who explained to Golovin—that the great Holy Lake (Baikal) and the mighty Lena

River were even more fitting boundaries designed by nature, and so the Russians might well agree to remain inland of them (about fifteen hundred miles farther inland than the mouth of the Amur).

On the second day, Gerbillon records, the Muscovites won the contest as to who should speak first. The Chinese, getting down to realities, demanded that the Russians confine themselves to Baikal and remove from Mongol territory, keeping Nerchinsk only as an outlying trading post.

At this the Muscovites laughed. "How kind you are! To allow us to keep what we already hold."

The laughter made the Chinese fear they were losing face. They ordered their pavilion dismantled, and prepared to leave. Father Gerbillon and the Pole had to fall back on person-to-person argument.

After several days maps were produced and the bargaining narrowed down to the Nerchinsk line slanting northeast through the main mountain range, the Khingan, toward the Sea of Okhotsk, leaving the Amur clear to the Chinese. But when Gerbillon carried the last details over to the Russians, he was startled to hear Golovin declare he could accept nothing but the Amur as far as Albazin. "Not an inch more will be given up."

The Ta-jin, it seemed, were less surprised than the Jesuit at the about-face of the Muscovites. They ordered up the regiments held in reserve until then and surrounded Nerchinsk. Soon after that—Golovin must have remembered his near capture in Selenginsk—the Muscovites sent an informal messenger to Gerbillon, admitting that they would agree to the Nerchinsk—Okhotsk boundary.

Gerbillon relates that the Muscovites were "most happy" to see him return. He got their agreement in writing. The Amur was to be evacuated, and the stronghold of Albazin demolished and abandoned.

At the signing of the copies of the new treaty, the Muscovite trumpets and drums sounded, envoys and Ta-jin drank tea and wine together, exchanging presents. Golovin gave the Chinese diplomats "a clock that sounded each hour, three watches, two silver gilt vases, a telescope about four feet long,

a looking-glass about a foot high, and some furs . . . worth in all not more than five or six hundred crowns." Gerbillon himself was given a "few sables and ermines, of little value."

The puzzle of the relative supremacy of Manchu emperor and Muscovite tsar was neatly solved in the writing. The copy of the treaty in Chinese, sealed and given to the Ta-jin, named K'ang hsi with his title before "the two tsars" (actually Ivan and Peter) while the copy in Russian, kept by Golovin, named the tsars with their titles before K'ang hsi. The copy in Latin, kept by Gerbillon, is believed to be the most accurate.

By this treaty Golovin withdrew his people from the eastern gate of the Muscovite dominion, out of Mongol territory, to the highlands around Baikal. But he secured authorization for trade caravans to pass into China. Three years later such a caravan carried in goods worth twenty-one thousand rubles, and brought out silk and other merchandise valued in Moscow at fifty thousand rubles. The scale of trade increased thereafter.<sup>1</sup>

The treaty of Nerchinsk was kept for more than a hundred and fifty years.

### *Opening of the Baraba Steppe*

For nearly that same hundred and fifty years the balance of power lay with the horsemen of the steppe, the Buriats, Mongols, and Kalmuk clans in this far east, because they had behind them the unchallengeable strength of the disciplined Manchu cavalry. By degrees the Buriats came under Russian control, and some of the Kalmuks migrated away, but not the Mongols. Chinese junks, not the flotillas of the Muscovite conquistadors, sailed the Amur.

Moscow had never had sufficient armed strength in the east to push through this eastern gate. Only the semblance of an army had ever appeared beyond the Urals. The scattered katorga guards, cossack colonists, foreign prisoners, and "free wandering men" had never been welded together. The Chinese razed and burned the fort of Albazin, the vestige of Chernigovsky's republic that had become a military objective of two growing empires.

Almost at the same time the Manchus penetrated mid-Asia beyond the Gobi. In so doing they drove westward as far as the Volga steppes a portion of the Kalmuks who would be heard from later.

Thereafter K'ang hsi's—and Kien lung's—wise colonial policy kept the restless steppe peoples, "those who dwell in felt tents," under the control of Peking. This policy aimed at influence through the lamas. Trade also increased along the old caravan routes between the Great Wall and mid-Asia. For at least a century this region lay under Chinese overlordship.

In the Russian north the Sibirsky Prikaz had no such colonial policy. The Russian zone of occupation had been pushed back into the more barren regions of extreme frost. Its centers like Yakutsk and Irkutsk stagnated—a Ukrainian exile became voevode of Yakutsk soon after the Nerchinsk treaty. By the end of the seventeenth century we no longer hear of explorers like Dezhnev or conquistadors like Khabarov.

Only the bleak peninsula of Kamchatka and the chain of islands leading to America remained unexplored, in the far east.

Instead, Siberia began to develop in a new direction, and not at all according to plan. That direction was southerly, and far back between the Urals and the headwaters of the great Ob—far distant from the Siberian katorgas and the Manchu frontier posts alike. It was where the Great Galitzin extended his post road.

Here in the fertile marsh steppe the new drafts of Ukrainians volunteered to turn aside and make settlements in the steppe. Behind them followed Old Believers of the peasant type, equally anxious to find a new land outside the authority of government.

In the far east a secretary of a blockhouse post wrote a few words in his ledger and thought no more of them. The words traced in poor ink related how a cossack of the post had paid a few kopeks in as "profit tax" on the sale of a native slave girl who had belonged to the cossack.

This was only a routine entry. The enslavement of the native peoples had been legalized by 1690. True, the Uluzhenie of the late Tsar Alexis had demanded "that unto no man shall any

Christian man sell himself." Obviously, since the girl had been neither a man nor a Christian, this law did not apply to her. Besides, the Uluzhenie itself had been pretty well forgotten by then. . . .

Toward the end of the century Old Believers were crossing the Urals in their hundreds. Entire villages and communes trudged afoot with their goods roped on oxen, and dogs drawing their sledges. They had no papers from the Transport Bureau; they did not show themselves at the barrier of the customs guard at Verkhuturie where the post road wound down to the marshy steppe; they did not sleep around the post stations built by the Great Galitzin. They moved as animals move along the charcoal burners' trails in the blue spruce forest, and they lost themselves in the open steppe because they were escaping from the law.

Raskolniki, Heretic Folk, believers in ancient truth, carrying with them the now outlawed prayer books of old time, carrying seed grain, ikons, children, and precious salt, they disappeared from sight of the post road, following water to the south.

A generation before when Nikon and the Moscow clergy had started changing the ancient books and manner of praying, there had been only fierce arguments as to the way to utter the word "Jesus," or whether to give a blessing with two fingers or three.

From the pulpit of the Usspensky, Simeon Polotsk had stormed at them, "You are rebels against wisdom!" But they had been troubled, fearing to lose their souls by betraying ancient truth for the new ways. Was it not a sin against God to look for truth in geometry or astronomy? Truth could not be changed like a woman's festival dress.

When Nikon had ordered the old prayer books to be burned, the good Tsar Alexis had whispered to him to bury them instead. Nikon had called their champion, old Avvakum, a madman. "We are madmen," Avvakum had retorted, "for the sake of Christ."

Now Avvakum had burned at the stake, like firewood. The monks of Solovetsky had been hung for rebelling against the law. And the Old Believers trekked beyond the Urals.

They were mocked. Folk in the settlements called them Milk Drinkers, Spirit Fighters, Self-burners. They drank the milk of their herds, they fought with axes and teeth to keep their beards unshaved. Sometimes when they were caught they shut themselves up in a hut and burned themselves.

In the marsh steppe where evil spirits ran with lights during the hours of darkness, the Old Believers died of the marsh sickness. Better that than to bow their head to their enemies, the servants of Antichrist. But they did not starve. The streams gave a miraculous draft of fish after the spring thaw; crops could be gathered in along the moist banks in two months.

Year by year colonies of the Raskolniki penetrated farther into this southern steppe, beyond the frontier ostroms. They came upon the cabin settlements of other fugitives; they built churches in the stands of timber, to house the smuggled ikons. Children were born who had never seen a road or heard the sound of a church bell.

Beyond the last growth of spruce and birch, the colonists discovered a lake where waterfowl swarmed, and Kirghiz tribes grazed their sheep. The way was not too hard. Moses had led his people out of the deserts by summoning water from rocks; here they had a network of streams to follow up, out of the dry plains into the lofty valleys watered by snow that melted all summer long upon the higher ridges. Settlements in such valleys were secure from raids. The colonists bartered rugs, hides, and sheep from the Kirghiz who wandered from valley to lowland as the grass changed.

After many years the colonists arrived at a smaller lake higher up which they christened Slavtown Lake. Beyond, their hunters sighted white peaks against the sky line, the peaks of the Altai.

Here in space beyond control of the Sibirsky Prikaz the colonists were cultivating the Baraba Steppe, toward the Altai Mountains where Europeans had never set foot before.

### *Sophia's Seat Behind the Two Thrones*

After the brief blood purge in the Kremlin in the spring of 1682, Moscow had lain inert as always after an internal dis-

ruption. With Matviev dead and Natalia hurried somewhere out of sight, there was no familiar person who could step to the head of the Red Stair and issue a command.

Without such a command, there could be no impetus to government. The bureaus of course had their heads, the four hundred-odd churches had their revered patriarch, the boyars of the great households in the Kitaigorod had their old-style council in which to debate, Furriers' Row had its masters of trade, the Foreign Suburb out by the Yauza River had its influential burghers and army officers. Yet no one in the teeming city could plan or act coherently until it was known beyond a doubt who would hold power upstairs in the palace of the Kremlin.

Certainly it would not be the fifteen-year-old Ivan, whose responses had to be given by his maternal uncle Ivan Miloslavsky when he appeared to the people, or the even younger Peter, who cared for nothing but the playthings he had unearthed in exploring the Arsenal. Power lay between the odd combination of the six imperial princesses—of whom Sophia had assumed the leadership—and the sixteen thousand Streltsi, of whom an unknown but ambitious noble, a Prince Khovansky, had taken command.

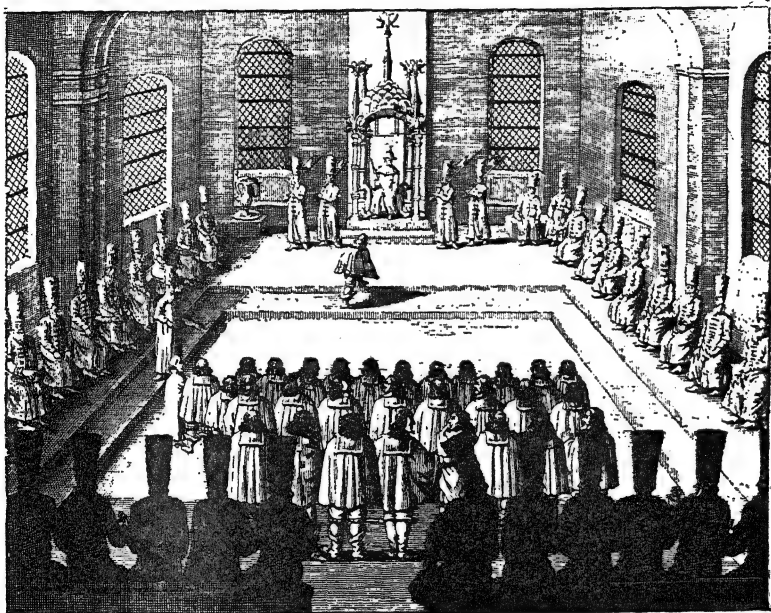
The Tsarevna Sophia behaved in unwonted fashion, sitting concealed behind a curtain that hung between the two throne seats of the boy tsars when they held an audience. When she visited the Room of Comedy, she had plays performed for her by French actors. Artists from Warsaw sat with her, to copy her likeness with paint, as if it were an ikon's face.

In old days the mother of Tsar Ivan the Terrible had exercised power for a space through her men but she had never called herself Regent of All of Rus, like Sophia.

"She is fat, with a head as large as a bushel, with hairs on her face and tumors on her legs," the French ambassador, Foy de la Neuville, wrote. "But just as her body is short and coarse, her mind is shrewd, unprejudiced, and full of policy. Although she has never read Machiavelli, she understands all his maxims naturally."

The gossip of the boyars' palaces told more than that—how this ill-favored but determined woman held violently to her

"Little Vassy," the gifted Galitzin, who besides his European drawing room, with wall mirrors in which folk stared at themselves and shelves of proscribed books—Krijanich's among them—had a wife of his own with tall sons. Little Vassy and



Olearius

European ambassador received by tsar. The old, semi-Asiatic ceremonial, with attendant councilors, guards holding axes uplifted, and water jar and towel for cleansing hands of tsar after contact with heretic European

his Sophia had been heard to talk about mad projects, such as teaching children to read French, and allowing serfs to leave their owner's land.

Much of this came to the ears of the Streltsi in their suburb. These musketeers of Moscow held control of the Kremlin; their *amour propre* had been satisfied with the erection of the victory monument to them in the Red Place; every man of them had received twelve rubles in back pay, besides the satisfaction of torturing the colonels who had withheld the pay. To gain a new privilege all they need do was march to the



Meeting Place, and demand it in the name of the new sovereign. Little Vassy of all men would hardly stand in their way when they marched in their yellow boots, with green and red kaftans aligned, carrying pikes and lighted matches for their guns. Otherwise, in the way of duty all they had to do was to run and put out fires in the streets.

"Yes," said Cossacks from the frontier, "and kill flies."

Whether, having tasted power, they felt the need of more power, or whether they felt in a way peculiar to Slavs a sense of guilt is not clear. Most of them had become Old Believers, and perhaps they thought of purging the Church as well as the dwellers upstairs. In any case they drew up a petition that covered twenty sheets of foolscap and they marched to the palace with Old Believer priests bearing old-fashioned candles and ikons. They faced the patriarch himself, and cut short his arguments by shouting, "Don't prate to us about grammar—we want to know what you believe!"

It was Sophia, seated there in full view of the throng of men, who accepted the challenge of the marchers, and by so doing sealed their fate. When the rival priesthoods—the clergy of the palace and the monks of the Streltsi—were at the point of tears and blows, she astonished them by bursting out: "If this patriarch is a heretic, then my father Tsar Alexis was a heretic . . . and we, the reigning tsars, are no tsars and we have no right to rule this land. . . . If we are heretics then we must go to another town and tell there what befell us here!"

In that uproarious hour Sophia gained prestige and the bewildered soldiery lost what chance they may have had of holding Moscow. They could not understand what had happened; they had harmed no one; they had only marched with a petition, and the woman whom they had befriended made them appear guilty.

Khovansky, who saw their dilemma more clearly than most of them, argued that they must occupy the Kremlin and enforce their own orders—his own, he hoped—or be broken. They could no longer exist as the military arm of Sophia, who had turned against them.

But the majority of the Streltsi could not conceive of actual rebellion; they had the loyalty of most Slavs to the tsardom

itself, and the Kremlin with its tombs and hallowed halls of the past seemed to be the embodiment of the vague *something* they served. By turning the issue between herself and them to the question of her orthodoxy and right to rule, Sophia had rendered them almost helpless. After thinking it over for a few days the Streltsi cut off the head of the monk who had been most outspoken among them.

No open message came now from the chambers of the regent to the quarters of the musketeers. Only the upstairs poor came, furtively with their rosaries, to whisper in corners with groups inclined to preserve themselves by befriending Sophia again. Khovansky, the opportunist, kept an escort of fifty men with him.

Sophia and her advisers forced the issue by withdrawing, in full view of the public, to an outer village. Most of the boyar families sympathized with her, and sympathized more when she retired to the sanctuary of the Troitsko, as if for protection against the enmity of the Streltsi. She could not be persuaded to return to Moscow or emerge from the great monastery with the boy tsars unless Khovansky would come to confer with her.

It was as easily managed as that. Eventually the leader of the Streltsi did go to Troitsko, and was captured and executed on the way. Without their commander, the Streltsi soon sent their submission to the monastery. Moved by their own sense of guilt as well as by uncertainty, and mindful of their families, the Streltsi acknowledged that they had sinned against the family of Alexis. No more than thirty of them were put to death, but their column of victory was torn down, and they lost their cherished regimental title of Guards of the Great Court.

Probably to the end of their lives most of these phlegmatic guardsmen never understood why they had been rewarded for killing off some of the Naryshkin men, and had been punished because one monk during a debate on the truths of religion lifted a fist against the patriarch of Moscow.

Having lightly punished the ignorant Streltsi, Sophia and her advisers kept the Guards intact, to balance the antagonism

of the great boyar families like the Kuragins and Sheremet'evs. In public she displayed kindness to Natalia and her son, yet kept them away from the Kremlin as much as possible. Apparently she had nothing to fear from the domestic-minded Natalia.

In this family balance-of-power arrangement Sophia appeared secure enough. In her joyous possession of the handsome and amiable Galitzin—she persuaded him eventually to send his wife to a monastery—and feeding her starved emotions, the dour-looking pupil of Simeon Polotsk (and the ghostly Machiavelli) must have felt that she was achieving wonders. She listened to the advice of the monk Sylvester, who was quite a translator; she employed a former clerk, Shakovity, to do the dirty work that Galitzin would not do; and, still young, she existed in a dream life of music with her meals, and conferences with foreign ambassadors, vicariously through Galitzin, who had taken upon himself the duty of chief of the Bureau of Ambassadors. Bound up in her obsession for Little Vassy, she did not realize that outside the suburbs and resorts of Moscow little was actually being accomplished by them or for them.

In Moscow Little Vassy built the first stone bridge and started a vogue of stone town houses. He shaped his ideas upon the thought of Alexis' reign, and even De la Neuville felt the impact of his ideas—of turning the great estates over to the peasantry, who would in turn contribute taxes to the Treasury, of sending nobles' sons to the west to study, of eternal friendship with Poland, the cultural mother of Rus.

"He was the most knowing lord of the Court at Moscow," wrote Father Avril, a French Jesuit who was trying to get permission to travel through Siberia to Tatar. "He loved strangers, particularly the French. It was rumored around that his heart was as French as his name [actually a Lithuanian name, like Miloslavsky]. He would willingly have granted us a passage through Siberia, out of his admiration for *Louis le Grand*."

Father Avril observes shrewdly that Galitzin had authority to grant the passports but could not risk the anger of the bureaus and the council of the boyars, who "upon some point

of honor" distrusted the foreign missionaries. Galitzin did what he could, safely, for Father Avril, allowing him to copy an excellent map of Siberia—most probably the one drawn by Spathary. That talented Greek was resurrected from obscurity and rewarded at long last for his achievement in the east.

Men like Father Avril and Foy de la Neuville were apt judges of statesmanship as well as personality. It was De la Neuville who coined the phrase "the Great Galitzin." The Frenchman had deep admiration for Little Vassy's projects in Moscow of that day for a permanent peace with the two nations at the east and west gates, China and Poland (Galitzin had sent Golovin to Nerchinsk), for "forty acre" tracts turned over to individual peasants, for a Foreign Suburb populated by technicians who had their own churches, theater, and resorts, for permission granted to foreign priests to travel and preach where they willed.

"All men," Little Vassy declared stubbornly, "ought to be equal before the law."

During the thirteen years of Galitzin's ascendancy—six under Feodor, seven with Sophia—the city of Moscow enjoyed peace, and a revival of trade through the two land gates of the dominion. The long-contested frontier cities of Smolensk and Kiev were possessed again. The city had, as usual in a time of quiet, a physical abundance drawn from the land itself. But Galitzin's projects lacked the common sense of Matviev's measures, or the realism of Ordin Nastchokin's betterment, that sought first of all for what *could* be done.

Those thirteen years did bring about one decisive change. The upper circles of Moscow lived in an atmosphere of innovation; plans became the topic of the time. As Alexis' circle had turned thought toward a new Russian life apart from the ancient Byzantine, so Galatzin's circles accepted as inevitable a change to western ways from ancient usage. It was a case of "Union Now." To them the only question was how and when? If Galitzin had had a little more time he might have arrived at some kind of an answer. "He had too many enemies," Father Avril relates, simply.

Galitzin stood on uneasy ground. His decrees had to be issued in the names of the two boys, one incapable of under-

standing, the other an absentee from the Kremlin except when he was called in to be robed and seated before the prostration of boyars and foreigners. However much Sophia doted on him, Galitzin was not her husband, nor was she actually Tsaritsa of Rus. If Galitzin had had the brutal purpose of a Khovansky or of the ex-clerk Shakovity, he might have held to his ascendancy. But he did not have that.

His own mistakes undermined him.

### *The Road to the Krim*

There were reasons, of course, for Galitzin's expedition beyond the southern frontier to conquer the Krim khan. That redoubtable Tatar dynasty still held the peninsula, the "Crimea," that controlled the shore of the Black Sea.

And just at that time the foreign ambassadors were agog with the overthrow of the Grand Turk, and Sobiesky's gallant relief of Vienna. What could be more timely than for Galitzin to use the long-disused field army of Rus to conquer the Krim khan, the last ally of the Grand Turk, to gain for himself glory like Sobiesky's and for his state of Rus real recognition among the concert of European powers? Galitzin himself hoped to form a Holy Alliance of the European states against the Turks.

Sophia felt the need of military acclaim for her hero. Galitzin knew a bit about soldiering,<sup>2</sup> a bit about the Ukraine . . . but he did not want to go.

There were long delays in preparation, and Galitzin reached the edge of the wild steppe late in the summer when the grass had dried up.

To her hero in the field of battle Sophia wrote: "Little daddy mine, my hope in everything, may God grant you life! This day is a day of full gladness for me, for our Saviour's name is being glorified by thee. As God once led Moses . . . so He leads us across the dry desert, by means of thee. Glory be to Him! What can I do here as recompense for thy mighty toil there—oh, thou, my joy, delight of my eyes . . ."

The army returned unexpectedly in the fall, with some thousands missing. In the Red Place where crowds collected,

the soldiers told of famine in the dry steppe, of the breakdown of transport trains . . . of the fire that consumed the sea of grass . . . no fodder for the animals.

The blame for the fire had been laid on Samoilovich, the Cossack hetman, who had quarreled with the officers of the Streltsi . . . he had been arrested on the march back . . . sent to Siberia with his sons (where he served later as voevode of Yakutsk).

The ill-fated army had not been able to get through the steppe, to reach the Tatars in the Krim. Sophia praised the valor of the soldiers, and gave each man a gold ruble. For the commanders she had medals struck. But Galitzin knew he must redeem the disaster, or be mocked. No one called him to account openly; anger rose against him in the city.

"Two accidents befell him at almost the same time," Father Avril relates. "As he was going in his sled to the palace, a common man flung himself into the sled and caught him by the beard, to stab him with the knife that Muscovites carry at the belt. The prince's servants who followed the sled ran up and stopped him . . . and a covered coffin was found at the entrance of his own palace with a note in it that read: *Galitzin, if your next expedition turns out no better than the first, you won't escape this.*"

It turned out only a shade better. A veteran Scottish officer, Patrick Gordon, was given command of the infantry, while Mazeppa, an able young Cossack, took the exile's place. An earlier start was made, but the transport bogged down in the snow and mud at the frontier.

By midsummer the army got across the steppe within sight of the sea where luminous streaks of salt shone at night like the souls of the dead seeking a resting place. Mazeppa's Cossacks kept off the lightly armed Tatars, but at the isthmus leading to the Krim, the army found a desert ahead as well as behind it, and food and transport failed again. Harried by sandstorms and by thirst, it made its way back to Moscow.

There Sophia, who would not admit defeat, had a triumphal arch built. Galitzin must parade through the Red Place.

Almost hysterical in her relief at his return and her anxiety at the rumors of another disaster, she insisted on appearing

herself in the procession of the clergy, to greet the commander in chief.

Peter, the son of Natalia, brought from his village resort to be robed for the occasion, showed his first public resentment at his half sister's conduct. The boy, now sixteen, refused to greet Galitzin as tsar, to thank him for the victory he had not won. Vigorously he objected to Sophia's doing the same thing. What tsarevna of the Romanovs, he argued, had done anything so foolish?

Once before they had clashed, at Kazan, where Peter argued that Sophia must not show herself with head unveiled in a religious procession, and she retorted by snatching up an ikon and walking out to the throng.

Now, at the palace, she greeted Galitzin, in Peter's place, and offered him a glass of brandy with her own hand.

She had squelched Peter in their first clash, but she had not helped herself by doing so. Her victory parade without Tatar prisoners and with many regiments missing stirred the watching throngs the wrong way. Old Believers prophesied that this woman who had sold herself to Satan by breaking out of the cloister would speedily fall from her evil triumph into hell. The Streltsi, who had endured much in the two disasters, hoped for the same thing.

Nothing was said openly. Sophia was weighed by mute Slavic minds and found wanting, not because she had taken it upon herself to be sovereign, but because she had failed to display the power of a true sovereign of Rus.

She did what she could. Stubbornly pretending that Little Vassy had conquered the steppe, she sent Shakovity south to build forts and make a show of advancing the frontier.

But after Little Vassy's failures, her passion for him cooled.

In her anxiety, even Peter's boyish activities assumed a menacing aspect. Peter had been instrumental in mocking her; Peter, the boisterous, gawky stripling, was now of an age to marry. Natalia had been approaching the great families, to select the best match for him. Sophia let it be known through the Kitaigorod that a Naryshkin like Peter would not be a proper match for the nobility of Rus. Meanwhile Sophia's spies reported that Peter was sending to the Arsenal for toys

for his playmates—for drums by the score, for trumpets, matchlocks, and *cannon*. No one believed that Peter could be serious about such things—Sophia's information was accurate on that point—yet, senselessly, she felt frightened because she saw nothing ahead but a lessening of her power as Peter became of age. She felt that Peter and his mother must be got rid of, if she was to be safe. With the imbecile Ivan as tsar, alone, she would be safe. Or so she thought.

Galitzin, disgusted by the victory parade, would hear of no conspiracy against the surviving Naryshkins.

Oppressed by her fears, Sophia tried to conspire herself. Only petty theatrical gestures resulted. Sophia turns again to the Streltsi, offering a vast payment if the musketeers would make public demand for her to be proclaimed tsaritsa.

"Demand to whom?" the Streltsi spokesmen retorted. "The young tsars? The elder hasn't sense enough to answer, and the younger doesn't care a kopek."

Sophia recalls her one ruthless conspirator. Shakovity stages a fake raid on a Strelitz barrack, kills a sergeant, passes the word around that the Naryshkins engineered it. The musketeers will not rise to the bait.

But the adolescent Peter shows temper again, impulsively demands Shakovity's arrest, then on second thought releases him quickly. A stupid blunder. Still, it gives Shakovity the trace of a grievance. He collects a small armed band, starts for Peter's village. The interested Streltsi warn the boy. In the middle of the night Peter, thoroughly frightened, hurries to a horse without waiting to put on any clothes and rides to the edge of a forest. There friends find him, and, sensing opportunity in such spectacular flight, lead him quickly to the time-honored asylum of the great Troitsko monastery. Thither Peter's mother and young sister hurry to join him. They find the boy tsar weeping hysterically, beseeching aid from everyone.

Thither, after some quiet debate, marches the nearest regiment of musketeers. It is clear to them that the most advantageous move is to be the first to protect the young tsar (Troitsko being both venerable and impregnable). Thither hurries the patriarch of Moscow.

It is all rather like the second act of a trite drama. The real



verdict is being cast against Sophia and Galitzin in the streets of Moscow. And Sophia, understanding her defeat, finds herself in the situation she had prepared for the Streltsi seven years before, helpless in possession of the Kremlin.

Outside the gates crowds begin to shout, "Time for you to take the road to the convent." Sophia appealed to a last possible force, the officers of the foreign regiments.

### *Suburb of the Foreigners*

For some time the foreign colony had been thriving not in Moscow but outside, a half hour's ride, along the beautiful little Yauza. Under Alexis the foreigners were liked, and under the young westerners they were favored. They dwelt apart in their Sloboda or village suburb because the Muscovites had a deep-rooted aversion to Lutheran kirks and Catholic chapels within the white walls of Holy Mother Moscow.

So the foreign merchants and professional soldiers and technical experts commuted into the city to do business and retired to their Sloboda to relax around their fishponds and taverns. They entertained new arrivals from beyond Constantinople-Riga, exchanged the latest tidings from Amsterdam or Edinburgh—the Dutch and the Scots were in the majority just then—and waited impatiently for new editions of Erasmus or John Milton. They married among themselves and were buried in their varied cemeteries with the proper bell and book because it was almost impossible to get permission from the Ambassadors' Bureau to leave Muscovy.

When a broom was hoisted to the city hall, the suburbanites turned out of offices and dwellings to sweep the streets clean, to cart away the dirt and fertilize their tulip and rose gardens—a phenomenon that amused visiting Muscovites as much as the strangers were puzzled by the annual Muscovite blessing of the water, when the high clergy of the Kremlin cut a hole in the thick ice of the Moskva and asperged the water of the river.

Visitors emerging from the hardships of the post roads bear witness to the gentle tempo of life in the Sloboda. "Most of

the strangers have gardens which they carefully cultivate," writes Cornelius Le Bruyn, a conceited world voyager with a gift for painting, after coming in from Le Hague. "They send for the different fruits and flowers from home . . . we cannot please the *Russians* better than by giving them nosegays." And in a Russian suburban village Le Bruyn is equally pleased with his hosts. "The gentleman had an handsome wife, a mighty good-natured sort of woman . . . who sat in a swing to make us merry after dinner, with two pretty waiting maids to swing her. The lady took a child in her lap and began to sing with her maids very agreeably, begging us to excuse her for not sending for music. When we thanked her, she carried us to the pond and got us some fish to take fresh home. These fish she dressed in the *Russian* way in her kitchen which was after the Dutch manner. . . . When they entertain their friends they sit down to table at ten in the morning and part at one in the afternoon to go home to sleep."

Master Le Bruyn's host on this occasion was a rich man, and the foreign folk in the Sloboda were also wealthy. Both Muscovite property owners and Sloboda merchants held the vantage point of middlemen—between the growing markets of the eastern parts, the great trading fairs at Astrakhan and Kazan, and the fur exchange at Leipzig and the shipbuilding at Le Hague. Moscow tapped the transcontinental trade. Muscovite hemp, flax, wax, potash, tar, hides, and lumber all paid toll or tax of some kind to Moscow, while the damask, linen, lacquer work, gold, drugs, and perfumes flooding in from China-way, from India and Isfahan and Bokhara, came up the Volga or across Galitzin's new road to be resold in Moscow. This trade of course benefited only the family in the Kremlin and the upper classes. It did not seep down to the Muscovite peasantry, or the populations of the smaller towns.

Between this privileged upper class of Moscow and the other six million-odd souls of Muscovy lay the grinding taxation of the bureaus, and the exaction of service, or serfdom. And not even the profits of the great merchants of Furriers' Row, or the estates of the new gentry like the Kuragins or Tolstoys, were actually secured to them by *law*. All such

property even to the serfs on the land lay at the disposal of the Kremlin—a disposal which was, of course, subject to the will of the nebulous tsar.

Thus around the theatrical duel between Sophia and the Naryshkin mother and son gathered the anxiety, the greed, the pride, and the prudence of all the other privileged families of Moscow as well as the soldiery in the streets.

For the disposal of the tsardom lay in the decision of the best-disciplined soldiery that could assemble outside the fortified gate of the Troitsko—to declare for or against Natalia and her son. And, with the Streltsi regiments hesitating, the decision really lay with the regiment best disciplined of all, the foreign regiment, officered by Scots.

In this crisis the foreign adventurers of the Sloboda were not directly concerned. They had their written contracts calling for specific pay; they had their immunities; they could brew prohibited liquor, smoke the forbidden tobacco—a sin in the eyes of Old Believers—or even *dance* to the devilish sound of bagpipes, while their women watched with naked faces, clad in the silks and furbelows of Paris fashion.

Franz Timmermann, who smoked a porcelain pipe, could discuss mathematics while building a house in the Sloboda without being reported as a heretic; Karschten Brandt could import masts and sails from Holland because he was supposed to build ships. Patrick Gordon had to be paid his stipulated salary as general of the army not because he was a general of Muscovy but because he was a Scot who expected to be paid in good florins or rix-dollars.

Even François Lefort was paid, although no one in the bureaux seemed to know just why. This young Swiss, who had got around Europe somehow by card money and tips, had nearly starved after landing at Archangel. A big handsome Rabelaisian youth with a knack of feasting friends, François Lefort had attached himself comfortably to a rich widow, and then had shifted to respectability by marrying a cousin of Patrick Gordon. When Lutheran or Calvinist or Catholic festivals came around, François Lefort served as the life of the festival, and between festivals he staged three-day banquets. After one such three-day party Patrick Gordon gave up

drinking spirits. The herculean Lefort had no equal as a drinker.

After twenty-eight years in Muscovy, Gordon of Auchleuchries had not reconciled himself to foreign exile. As a youngster, a fugitive Jacobite, he had served in most of the armies of Europe and had been persuaded by an ambassador from Moscow to become a military expert under the tsars, with command of a regiment. From the first Gordon had been aggrieved; he had no sooner started to draw his pay than the debased copper currency was issued, and from all the tsars—Alexis, Feodor, and the two boys, with Sophia behind the curtain, he had been able to obtain only one leave to visit his native highlands and offer his respects to Charles II. "Strangers," he wrote of those in the Sloboda, and particularly of the Scottish colony, "be looked upon as a company of hirelings, and at the best (as they say of women) but as *necessaria mala*. No honors . . . to be expected here but military . . . no marrying with natives, strangers being looked upon by the best sort as scarcely Christians, and by the plebeyans as meer pagans . . . and the worst of all, the pay small."

By then Patrick Gordon had an estate of his own, an English wife, children, servants. Because he was a man of tested integrity, the most experienced general in the heterogeneous Muscovite army, he had influence enough. Still he was conscious of the undercurrents around the Kremlin—of "rumors unsafe to be uttered"—when he had been assailed as a heretic, and when he had seen the Ukrainian Samoilovich arrested and sent to Siberia without a hearing. (Gordon and the Ukrainian hetman had once held the line of the Dnieper miraculously against the much-dreaded Turks.)

It was to Patrick Gordon that Sophia sent her appeal in that hot August of her overthrow. The Scot had served her regime as dispassionately as he had served the capable Alexis. Now he pondered the chances of the refugees at Troitsko. There the patriarch and queen mother stood for stability, hence for regular payment of salaries. And the gangling Peter had become a regular visitor to the Sloboda, which lay so near his exile village of the Transfiguration (Preobrazhensky). Peter had a way of coming down-river in odd crafts, to listen to Tim-

mermann's exposition of mathematics. Yes, the foreigners spent a deal of their time finding things to amuse Peter.

Obviously, Patrick Gordon preferred to have the inquisitive Peter married and proclaimed sole Tsar of Rus than to have to deal with the excitable Sophia and the idiotic Ivan. Moreover Sophia's latest actions appalled the soldier. She refused to surrender the creature Shakovity; she summoned representatives of the Streltsi to the Red Stair, to hear Ivan stammer out a speech and to offer them—common soldiers—glasses of vudka with her own hand.

Worse, in sheer desperation she tried to go herself to the Troitsko to plead. She was turned back by guards on the road at the spot where Khovansky had been murdered. As nearly as the wary Gordon could tell, the invisible scales had been tipped against Sophia. Galitzin admitted as much to him.

So he marched his picked regiment with the Scottish officers to the gate of the great Troitsko, and marched back escorting Peter and the patriarch to the Red Place. The Streltsi guards on duty lifted no weapon against them. With white and gold colors flying and drums sounding they marched on into the Kremlin gate. Both Peter and the crowd assembled around the gate seemed to enjoy the parade in.

Probably Peter never knew how carefully it had all been arranged beforehand. The Streltsi and the dominant boyars of Moscow had agreed that Sophia should go to the convent and Peter to the palace. Even Galitzin had agreed.

The change-over within the family happened without stir, without the ringing of the Vvestnik bell. Shakovity vanished into the torture chambers, where he was joined by his few companions among the Streltsi. The Great Galitzin received his fate in writing signed by Peter. This De la Neuville reports:

"You are ordered by the tsar to betake yourself . . . far, beneath the Arctic, and to stay there all your days."

Sophia selected the Monastery of the Virgin, the one nearest Moscow, to go to. As for Ivan, he was led aside by Peter, who tried to explain why he was no longer to be robed as tsar. Instead, Peter put on the ancient *shapka*, the jeweled, rimmed

cap that had crowned Ivan the Terrible. Until then Ivan the imbecile had worn the ancient regalia and Peter had had to do with makeshifts.

The boyars who crowded in to bow the head to him, and to exchange gifts and plans with the patriarch, Natalia, and the rejuvenated Naryshkins, praised God that Peter Alexeivich showed none of the mind-sickness of the Romanovs. Peter looked lusty, and certainly he was taller than any of them by a hand's length. (Actually, he grew to six feet eight and a half inches.)

Under the benevolent patriarch, the oblivious Natalia—"My hope and my life," she said of Peter—and the agreeable boyars the routine of the Kremlin assumed the placid, anti-liberal aspect of the old days before Alexis. There was no longer a Great Galitzin to brew plans overnight. The only one uneasy seemed to be Peter Alexeivich himself. He had wanted Galitzin killed, and he told the boyars in council to send the bulk of the Streltsi regiments away from Moscow, where they had always been, to duty on the Polish and Ukrainian frontiers.

Still, the overgrown boy wandered moodily among the familiar landmarks of the Kremlin, avoiding the perpetual throngs shuffling past the bell tower of Ivan Grozniy, avoiding the herd of choir singers in their cassocks, bound for the cathedral.

When the bells clanged out in cadence, he often sprang up violently, looking about him for a doorway. In such a convulsion he hurried with his face twitching, past the upstairs poor clutching their rosaries, and the terem doors where dwelt the five tsarevnas, his half sisters.

At such times fear came to him with memories. Not of the rush of the waterfall that had startled him when a child asleep against his mother in a small boat—so the servants had told him of his fright that kept him from the edge of water until he learned to sit in boats without trembling, and to let the boats take him out on the water. Now he often did that of his own choice, enjoying the sense of freedom when water rushed harmlessly against the boat's sides. . . . The fear tightened inside him when he approached the Red Stair, where blood had poured out of the bodies of men familiar to him. Some-

times his throat tightened and he screamed when a cockroach was crushed near him.

The fear centered within a ring of bearded faces and clutching hands. They moved at him as if to tear him, and then he stiffened in convulsion, and ran—

He ran out of the doors, from the shadowy halls with hidden ceilings, into the open air. He ran down steps, to feel the rough ground under him, and at times he walked away from people, half running in his long stride, down to the river. There, if he found a boat, he sat down in it, until he felt quiet and relaxed.

After a few weeks Peter Alexeivich left the Kremlin, and drove back to his village of the Transfiguration.

There he stayed because he liked it. There he had his own playfellows, and the small wooden cottage near the river where his sailboat lay moored, and where he could sleep soundly, without nightmares. He did not sleep so well in the labyrinth of the Kremlin's vaulted halls.

Moreover near the village lay the one spot peculiarly his own, the field with the play fort that he had christened Pressburg and pronounced "Prespur." There he liked best to be.

It was difficult, now that Peter Alexeivich had put on the shapka of the Tsar of All of Rus and had become of legal age—seventeen—to wear it, to keep him from doing what he wanted to do.

### *The Fort and the Boat*

Even at the first the influence of the west had been laid upon him. His mother had been raised in the household of the Scottish wife of Matvieiev. She had understood that musical boxes did not operate by witchcraft.

Like any doting mother she had invoked the patriarch of the Church to teach godliness to her child. The actual tutor had been no Simeon Polotsk but a simple-minded old Russian clerk, Zotov, who had some trouble in chanting liturgy, who eased his soul with wine, tears, and prayers. Since Peter tired easily of letters, Zotov showed him pictures of the ancient heroes, particularly of Ivan and Alexis galloping their mettle-

some horses against arrays of pagans. When pictures failed, he would take Peter to sing with the choir.

This quite normal system of education tended more and more to play on Peter's part, and to wine sipping on Zotov's. The notebooks kept by Natalia's hero later showed that he was never sure of his spelling, that sums beyond simple addition bothered him—that he preferred to draw imaginary designs of things which never became completed. In fact Peter was stupid, except that he developed skill in devising games. But he had absorbed ancient Russian traditions, in a way peculiar to himself. This schooling ended when he was ten, with the first upheaval on the Red Stair, and his own inclination thereafter to teach himself.

His very mild exile to the suburbs gave him the small river, the quiet village of the Transfiguration, and the exciting Sloboda as his area of activity—with an occasional visit to the Troitsko to hear the talk of politics when necessary. Thereafter Peter led exactly what we mean today when we speak of a healthy outdoor life. Like any teen-age boy of today he wandered restlessly from river to playground to the immensely interesting homes of the foreigners, where he became familiar not only with musical boxes and striking clocks but with porcelain pipes and maps drawn to scale. He stayed out late at night, wore any old clothes, tried to quaff down schnapps manfully. In Moscow he ran to fires and hung around the crowd when *Vyestnik* tolled.

So great was his dread of the Kremlin that he had avoided entering its gates if possible, although he had seemed to go through his paces as the "other" tsar cheerfully enough. At that time he and Natalia had to live as pensioners of the Sophia-Galitzin coterie, and, back of all the pretense of royalty-on-sufferance, they had almost no actual money to spend. Sophia had seen to that. Natalia had to borrow from the patriarch and the treasurers at Troitsko. Peter seemed to be indifferent to this near poverty at the time, but he did not forget it. Actually during the years when he was a pensioner of the Kremlin, Peter Alexeivich had less hard money than Patrick Gordon, or Brandt.

He did have the privilege of taking what he liked from that



warehouse of curiosities in the Kremlin, the Arsenal. There the teen-age boy who had need of nothing except to amuse himself found much of interest. At the first "a statue of the Lord Christ and a German blunderbuss." Later on he sent for great quantities of "gunpowder, standards and pistols." Not precisely the articles a precocious student would select. True, there came a demand for "a globe of the world." But it seemed to do service more as a globe than as a *mappa mundi* because it was returned to the Arsenal speedily for repairs. Much later Peter did demand "a treatise on fire weapons"—and at the same time "a funny ape."

Peter commanded that the articles be sent, and he knew exactly what he wanted at the moment. On a visit to the Arsenal he noticed a foreign astrolabe (nothing of the kind being made in Muscovy at the time), and a courtier took pains to bring him a better one from Paris. Immediately Peter wanted to know how it worked, and Franz Timmermann at the Sloboda tried to explain to him the mystery of angles by which heights could be measured. This led to arguments about rudimentary mathematics. In this way Peter acquired by demonstration about as much mathematical knowledge as he gained ability to read from the winebibbing Zotov. What interested him was the *thing* itself, and the use of it. He wanted to be told all about that very quickly.

After he was told, he could imitate an action readily enough. But he could never devise a method for himself.

Once when he was examining the junk stored in a Romanov lumberyard at Transfiguration, he and Timmermann came across a sloop of a design unfamiliar to Peter. "It is an English boat," Timmermann assured him, "aye, and better than others."

"Why is it better?"

"Because it can be sailed close to the wind, and against the wind."<sup>8</sup>

Nothing of course would satisfy Peter but to try out the English craft for himself. It did have good sailing qualities and it served nicely to take the boy down the river to the Sloboda.

Very soon after that the Arsenal got a command request from its tsar for all its ship models. Peter began to collect dif-

ferent types of river craft, and sailing became one of his passions. His craze for small boats took him over to the lake at Pereiaslavl, where Brandt was building a larger craft for the Volga run. At once this lake became one of Peter's favored resorts.

The shipwrights let the absentee tsar use their tools, and steer a finished ketch across the lake. They were placid Dutchmen, and they treated the gangling Peter much like any other fifteen-year-old boy. By then he had acquired a remarkable smattering of High Dutch, mixed with German and a few English and Latin words. Timmermann became "*Mein friendt*."

Like any other impetuous man working with foreigners Peter began to use words as he needed them, few and matter-of-fact, from whatever language. As long as he talked about *things* these men of the Sloboda and shipyards understood him well enough. Ideas were another matter.

The river and the Pereiaslavl lake meant release to the boy who had to travel to the Kremlin only to put on musty regalia, to stand and sit through exhausting ceremonies. On the lake he could point his astrolabe at a star over the horizon, and with a twist of his powerful hands turn the bow of his ship to a new course.

The wooded lake with the gilded domes of the old town reflected in it did not resemble Moscow in any way. It made no demands on Peter, who quartered himself there in a cabin overlooking the water, near the shipyards. This cabin had a crude wooden eagle over the door, but no other mark of a royal occupant. During a summer spent in this fashion on his "little sea" Peter worked at building a yacht after a Dutch design.

The passion for his fort equaled his love of ships. Old custom required that Muscovite princes grow up attended by their own rude court of other boyars' sons, and armed servants. It was a relic of the feudal *drujijina*. In Peter's case these companions were a ragged crew, a few young nobles, many grooms, dog boys, falconers, and such. As usual their main

sport was the gang fight, in which two sides took positions and fought it out with clubs, stones, and fists.

Peter's coterie was called various names, "jolly grooms" and "men of play." Sophia called them blackguards. Peter had a way of organizing the fights into first-rate sham battles. His earliest crude earth fort on the Yauza was transformed by degrees into a military work of some pretensions, thanks to Timmermann's mathematics, and coaching by interested foreign officers of the Sloboda. Hence the requisitions on the Arsenal.

It is very doubtful if Peter felt any desire to master the art of fortification in the manner of a new Vauban. Pressburg, under its varied pronunciations, became for him the center of his activity, the test of his wits, and his achievement in imitation of the foreign generals.

For the boy was quick to imitate. Among the hundred-odd colonels in the Sloboda, he heard discussions of campaigns, sieges, mines, blockades. Probably the hundred colonels emphasized how often they had been victorious by this or that expedient in which the various colonels—Brandenburgers, Scots, Poles, and Swiss—had played a daring, even a heroic part.

Much of what they explained to him Peter tried out at his fort, sometimes with unfortunate results. Inevitably, some of the foreign experts attended as observers and then as honorary commanders on either side. Peter displayed remarkable persistence in waging his mimic campaigns. After he mobilized his "men of play" into two regiments, he needed uniforms for them. When he needed more recruits, he impressed choirboys, and servants, and even the dwarfs who had attended him to church as a child. To attack fortified cannon, he needed new weapons, such as an ingenious grenade caster. His companions began to call him Bombardier Peter. He liked that.

It was only a game, and of course he had other anxieties. He worked out his worries in experimenting with the *things* of his fort at "Prespur." As he had divorced himself from the fear of the Red Stair, he was divorcing himself from higher education, from the demands of the boyars and the concept of the Muscovite tsardom by becoming Bombardier Peter.

Persistently Bombardier Peter avoided officials and official

conferences. Too often at such meetings when tired or excited his face would twitch, his head jerk down to the left, and his body stiffen in convulsion. As time went on he seemed to convince himself that he was working industriously when he was merely playing.

At twenty-two Peter stood or rather strode around incessantly, six feet eight inches tall, his nervous strained head thrust forward, his great hands always restless. He had been Tsar of Rus in name for five years. And he had taken to traveling in a carriage at a gallop within his orbit of the Kremlin, the Transfiguration cottage, the river, and the lake.

His regiments named for two villages, the Transfiguration and the Semenov, had grown to full strength. They had been drilled by Patrick Gordon, for whom Peter had liking as well as respect. The Scot contrived ingenious fireworks—"rockets and firewheels"—which delighted Peter. There was now a duly titled King of Pressburg, and a patriarch—Peter's tutor, the religious and bibulous Zotov. It almost seemed as if Peter had a court of his own there on the river.

One thing was certain. Peter had guards enough of his own now. In no way did he need to depend on the Streltsi. Up at Pereiaslavl he had a miniature fleet of his own, armed with serviceable cannon. His last requisition upon the Arsenal had been "ammunition for all kinds of cannon."

Perhaps because Peter's incessant journeying about had no greater visible results than the mimic state at Pressburg, rumors ran about the countryside. These rumors declared that Peter had bowed before the aging Zotov, greeting him as "Your Drunken Holiness." Also in the combats at the fort, dwarfs were seen hurrying about, stabbing and shooting earnestly, while no one dared punish them. Moreover, twenty-four men had been killed in his last mimic battle, a full-scale siege of Pressburg. A boy of the Dolgoruky family had been killed.

There was a strangeness about the whole Pressburg affair. It had grown too great to be merely a game. Could the tsar at Pressburg be ridiculing Moscow? Could he be joining himself to the heretic Sloboda?

In the Sloboda the matter-of-fact Patrick Gordon wrote that a five-pound rocket made for Peter "took off the head of a boyar." The Pressburg regiments he dismissed as "ballet dancers."

The truth was that Peter had thrown himself entire into his pastimes. A new quality was developing in him, stubbornness. The fort had been an escape for him; now it must be brought to accomplish something. But what? Evidently Peter did not know. As a man grown, he was still playing, with unquestionable seriousness, the game of a boy of fourteen.

It was François Lefort who broke the impasse of the imitation fort, the toy navy on the lake, and the half-real army. He suggested that Peter extend his travels to Archangel, where he could inspect some seagoing vessels and make a trial voyage on the White Sea.

At this many bearded heads were shaken in the Kremlin. Such a journey! No Great Master of Moscow had ever ventured to Archangel at the edge of the Frozen Sea. After the manner of mothers, Natalia made tearful protest. If Peter *must* go he must promise not to set his foot upon a foreign ship that might take him into God knew what peril on that sea of darkness.

"Is the protection of God not there as well as here?" Peter wrote her. Natalia had no answer to that. Apparently he had got around his mother's order successfully, yet he may well have believed what he said. Did he not feel protected on the deck of a sloop at Pereiaslavl?

### *François Lefort*

Of the young giant who was now his friend and patron, the gargantuan Swiss adventurer said, "You can only guide him where he wants to go himself. You can't hold his interest unless you keep his affection."

Affection there was between these two oversize men—Peter Alexeivich being the taller, François Lefort the heavier. Both were fluent in the German-Dutch-Slav patois of the Sloboda; both sought amusement, Lefort to plan it, Peter to enjoy it. In

his rambling wooden mansion Lefort could conjure up a pageant, a shooting match, a songfest, or a garden party at little or no notice. As chef, or master of ceremonies or simple exhibitionist, he could drive dull care away.

His house, like a tavern, stood open to his friends. Women who came there did not resemble in the least the Muscovite women of the old fashion, bundled up like nuns. They laughed at jests and made jests of their own; their bright dresses revealed throats and legs. Lefort selected for Peter a vintner's daughter who pleased him immensely. She bound him to the Sloboda with a new tie.

This tie was stronger than the bond of marriage. Nothing about his marriage had held satisfaction for Peter. Contrived at the eve of Sophia's overthrow, while he had been a pensioner still, it had kept him for only three months at the side of a pallidly handsome girl, Eudoxia—brought up in the terem, addicted to prayers and tears. When Eudoxia's kinsmen had swarmed in to argue for privileges and appointments, even Natalia disliked this bride. Three months after his marriage, Peter was back at Pereiaslavl without Eudoxia. Perhaps no home could have contained the restless Peter at that time, but certainly Eudoxia and her relatives could not hold him to the terem he detested.

Perhaps it was due more to the failure of his own marriage than to Lefort's contriving that Peter should have ordered a new home for the Swiss man of all parts. It was a brick palace with all the comforts of the west built into it, even a ballroom and picture gallery. With such an establishment the gifted Lefort could entertain on a grander scale, and Peter saw to it that he did so.

The new palace served as more than a banquet hall; for the succession of officials from Moscow and the foreign ambassadors who were always searching for the Great Master of Rus could be received there without any effort on Peter's part. He could quarter himself in his escape cabins and appear in Lefort's drawing room only when he chose to do so.

He did not choose to do so often. About this time Patrick Gordon—Patrick Ivanovich, as Peter called him—wrote: "I

have been promised great rewards. . . . I have no doubt that when the young Tsar himself takes the reins of government, I shall receive satisfaction."

The reins of government, however, stayed where they were in the hands of the patriarch, and of the conscientious Golovin, who had finished his work at the east gate of the empire. What leadership there was came from one of Peter's most gifted "men of play," Boris, the young cousin of the Great Galitzin. Boris, careless as any scion of the great Slav families, yet educated in the western way, had steered Peter through the tense days at Troitsko.

So it was actually upon the small group of Troitsko that Peter depended. Boris, seldom serious and rarely sober, shared in Lefort's mighty revelries with a grace Peter could not match.

Peter's efforts in that direction turned out strangely. Just before the Archangel journey he conducted a marriage for one of his jesters, a half-wit, Jacob by name. Jacob had been even more amusing than the bevy of dwarfs, still his companions.

Diplomats were summoned from Lefort's house to attend in court attire the wedding arranged by the Tsar of Rus. Jacob rode to church in Peter's most impressive carriage, while the diplomats found oxen supplied them as mounts, with attendants in Falstaffian array leading swine and dogs behind them. The wedding feast was held at Lefort's, for three days.

During the service in the church, Peter sang mightily in the choir.

"Remember," the puzzled diplomats warned each other while they drank Lefort's beer, "remember always that the tsar is actually no more than a boy of six years."

Not that they looked on this young giant of a tsar as a case of arrested development. He was simply untaught. Actually he had mastered no more than the hornbook of letters and the chanted doxologies that a child in the west might learn by rote. The diplomats had been uncomfortable on their oxen plodding over ice-glazed ruts of a street. Yet, like Lefort, Peter had picked up knowledge of a different kind in the

alleys and water fronts where men retorted by spitting and smacking good blows.

As for the mockery of a marriage, there had been Peter's disgruntlement with Eudoxia, and his animal satisfaction with the vintner's daughter. More than that. He really cherished the fool Jacob—he had always been gentle with his half-wit brother. Was it strange, then, that he staged, crudely enough, a mockery of a marriage or saluted Zotov as "His Drunken Holiness"?

Still, something more than good-natured fun was manifesting itself in Peter's vagaries. His exhibitions imitated Lefort's gargantuan banquets only up to a point. Beyond that irony appears—not the irony of a western mind, but the ridicule of the oriental mind that justifies itself by making its antagonists appear foolish.

Under Peter's gusty good humor savagery lay. The amusing battles at Pressburg had ended often in bloodletting. After Troitsko Peter had no thought of harming the helpless Ivan, but he had wanted to make an end of the Great Galitzin until Boris talked him out of it. He had been amused when his dwarfs stabbed the full-grown "men of play." Gordon had not liked that.

This shadowy orientalism—no strange heritage in a Muscovite of that day—showed itself fleetingly in Peter's relationship with his companions of the Sloboda. They were no favorites after the European manner but cup companions, devoted ones, to be ordered about, beaten, and cherished at the same time. Turks, if not Mongols, had known such *yuldash* and *anda* relationship, and the Slavs themselves had held to such brotherhoods.

Make no mistake. These foreigners had been given no official positions. Patrick Ivanovich remained a lieutenant general in the employ of the Razriad. Lefort himself held no rank at court; he merely served as Peter's entertainer in chief, and while Peter must have paid for the new casino-palace, there is no record of regular drafts on the Treasury drawn for Lefort. The vintner's daughter stayed in the Sloboda.

No, Peter had not brought his crew of intimates to the responsibilities of the Kremlin, as Sophia had done. He had tried



to journey himself between the Kremlin and the Sloboda. At his fort on the Yauza he had tried, instinctively, to build for himself some milieu of his own, imitating the Sloboda and apart from the Kremlin. In that he had failed.

One characteristic Peter revealed very clearly: his untiring persistence. In his shuttling between the Kremlin gates and the Sloboda he had been traversing two centuries of time. Life within the citadel of Moscow remained very much as it had been in western Europe in 1494, while the modern spirit of 1694 activated the Sloboda. Yet Peter was not reconciled to giving up his meeting ground of the boyish fort on the river, or his rendezvous with time at Lefort's casino-palace.

The Swiss adventurer seemed to have an understanding of Peter, and, after his fashion, to feel a responsibility for him. Lefort was influencing Peter to do what the troubled giant really craved—to escape for a while from his anxiety, to travel at a gallop to a real sea and to ships that were more than models or yachts on a lake.

### *The Storm on the Frozen Sea*

The choice of Archangel for the journey's end is surprising at first thought, because it was the rudest of seaports, a jumping-off place facing Arctic waters, icebound for most of the year.

Yet what other seaport could be found? Azov, at the Don's mouth, was held by the Turks; along the Baltic the ports were in the hands of the Swedes and others. Only one alternative remained.

From the Pereiaslavl Lake itself Peter could have sailed down the Volga to Astrakhan, a great terminal of the eastern trade. Certainly the ghost of Ordin Nastchokin would have cried for the eager young tsar to inspect this artery of the Volga. But the southern steppe was by no means pacified after the revolt of the generation before.

If Peter could have made his first journey to the Caspian, his future and the trend of Russian development might have taken a different course. In any case he went to Archangel on the dim White Sea where Dutch seamen sheltered in log

cabins told him of voyages under the midnight sun, of passages found through drifting ice floes. There he heard from the skippers themselves of the search for a way by sea to Cathay. For a space this venture caught at his imagination.

It was not easy to get Peter away from Archangel. He ordered a full-rigged ship from Holland, with forty-four cannon, casks of French wine, and rare apes. Clad in the pantaloons and smock of a Dutch sailor, he asked for details of the lives of admirals like Van Tromp.

As he had absorbed the talk of the colonels in the gardens of the Sloboda, he drank in the words of these rough-spoken skippers who had seen the towers of Gothland emerge from the mist, who had fought their way through the ice of the Neva in flood. With them he lifted timbers in the drying sheds or worked with his powerful hands along the ropewalks odorous with hemp. Compared to this, the blue lake of Pereiaslavl seemed no more than a man-made pond.

Taking a bark out to the islands of the White Sea in the teeth of a gale, Peter found himself unable to cope with the pounding seas. The wheel twisted itself in his grasp with a force he had never known before. After a while the Dutch skipper watching beside him took the wheel suddenly, saying, "I know more about this than you do."

Peter made no protest. Nor did he join the other passengers who were praying for deliverance from wind and waves. Instead he watched the experienced seaman steer close to the wind, keeping the sails drawing.

Along with his persistence Natalia's spoiled son was showing a remarkable inclination to take only a minor part in what was going on—if all went well. At the fort on the Yauza he had been content with the lowly rank of bombardier, letting others be colonels of regiments and captains of batteries. Up at Archangel the seamen called him "skipper" and this pleased him. Bombardier Peter Alexeivich was also, by testimony of hard-handed seamen Skipper Peter.

In letters henceforth he sometimes signed himself: "*Schipper Fon schip santus profetities*." Interpreted, this means, "Skipper of the Sainted Prophet." Apparently he had been headed out to meet his made-to-order frigate from Holland, the *Prophet*

itself, when he had found the storm too much for him. This Dutch-built frigate delighted Skipper Peter, and there was no weaning him away from it.

When Natalia died in Moscow, Peter grieved and wept, hurrying south as fast as wheels and runners could take him. Yet after three days among the throngs at the Kremlin he was off to feast with Lefort at the new Sloboda palace, where the Swiss had held state during his master's absence, as a viceroy incognito.

Signature of Peter, in European lettering, at end of missive in Russian script

Then, when there seemed to be most need for him to attend to affairs of state, Peter was off to his arm of the sea again, where the *Prophet* awaited him.

"The streets are covered with broken timbers," Cornelius Le Bruyn relates, "and so dangerous to cross that a man continually runs the hazard of falling. Besides, they are full of the rubbish of houses which . . . looks like the ruins of a fire."

This log town of Archangel—its only stone building being the citadel, which was more of a warehouse, active for only four summer months between the thawing and the freezing of the ice—would not seem to be a place that could intrigue Peter Alexeivich for so many months. Certainly his boon companions of the Sloboda hardly appeared there.

Yet precisely in Archangel was he able to investigate European wares on the incoming ships, and to order cordage and compasses for his own vessels. He ordered a great many cannon from the Swedes, who, it seemed, possessed excellent iron. Archangel itself could not have held him, any more than the vast fir forest through which he rode to get there. It was the outlook, the possibility of the port, that caught his fancy. As

if he were sitting snowbound in a cabin looking through a window open to the west.

Before long, and entirely on his own initiative, Peter was to build such a port, giving on the west.

Foreigners like Brandt, who had to hibernate for one reason or another in Archangel, made themselves snug enough. They had rooms with stoves, with the wooden walls smoothed on the inside. Brandt had paintings and even a harpsichord that he played. "They divert themselves with gaming, dancing, drinking and eating," Le Bruyn explains, "and even till it is pretty late in the night." Into such a routine Peter fitted well. This milieu brought all comers to the same level even more than the fort on the Yauza. With brandy and constant talk he could ease his restlessness. The heavy sleep of Arctic nights kept him free from convulsions. He sang well, too, in the choir of the Sleeping Virgin Church.

Moreover these merchants and skippers were real men of affairs who argued hotly about pence but took orders for thousands of rix-dollars. Since Peter could give such an order with a casual word they treated him with honest respect. They were *practical*. They weren't in the least like the archpriests who argued about Holy Writ, or the ambassadors who hid God knew what contemptuous thoughts behind flowery compliments. . . .

The months passed almost uncounted.

Kliuchevsky says that Peter would always be a guest in his own home. He would also be a truant from his own government for a long time.

During those months of isolation in Archangel, Peter's eyes were turned perforce to the west, not to the east. The native folk of the coast, Lapps and Samoyeds, lived with and by animals—"more like bears than men," Le Bruyn summed up. On the island the monks of Solovetsky had been hanged nineteen years before, and their monastery had been turned into a *katorga*. Nothing of interest to be seen there. It was more entertaining to chat with the Finns and Swedish officers who came over by sled from the *Wardhuis* and Viborg town to buy the foreign tobacco.

The half-forgotten monks of Solovetsky had avowed themselves to be Old Believers. Now the persecution of the Old Believers throughout Rus reached its height. In their thousands, fugitive Old Believers were spreading beyond the Urals, seeking the farthest frontier settlements. Behind them government posts moved only slowly, as log forts were pushed out along the rude roads. In the Urals searchers had found iron ore and silver deposits. These newcomers enlarged the villages along the Great Galitzin's road.

Little of all this appeared in the maps and files of the Sibirsky Prikaz, and less could have reached Peter's ears at Archangel. The bureau itself hardly knew what was going on. It had sent its third great trade caravan through the dangerous Mongol country into the safety of the Great Wall of China. Since it had a monopoly of the fur exports to Peking, its leaders asked the Chinese ministers whether any other, illicit traders had appeared from Muscovite territory in the past year. The Chinese smiled. "By our records," they said, "about fifty other caravans came." On the records of the bureau its own official traders took in goods to the value of thirty-one thousand rubles, and returned with sixty-five thousand worth. Adventurers, as mysterious as the independent traders who crossed into China, discovered a new land. Rather it was a giant promontory stretching into the Eastern Ocean Sea (the Pacific). Cossacks who got through antagonistic native tribes to enter the forbidding peninsula brought back a rich trove of sables, red fox skins, and "sea otters." They did not know how great might be this new land that they called Kamchatka, but they intended to return at all risks to reap a full harvest of the valuable sables.

At Archangel Peter looked at the maps in a new book *North and East Tartary*, written by a Dutch explorer, Nicholas Witzen. He did think vaguely of sending ships to survey this Arctic coast eastward.

There was nothing, then, to draw his imagination to the east. He refused to return to Moscow to receive an embassy from the great Shah of Persia.

Spathary was still translating for the bureau in Moscow, but Peter had not talked with him, or seen his reports in the files

of the bureau. At Archangel he had not read that book of Nicholas Witzen's. Unlike Alexis he did not read books.

There is no possibility that at Archangel Peter could have felt the pull of the continent itself upon his people. He hardly knew the varied peoples speaking so many different languages that made up the population of All of Rus.

In those very months another Dutchman, Isbrant Ides, who had gone with the second trade caravan to China (profit on the books of the bureau, twenty-one thousand rubles yielding fifty thousand), was writing the book of his journey to the east. This book he was dedicating to: "The most Serene and all-Powerful Tsar and Great Prince, PETER ALEXEIVICH, by the grace of God, Emperor of the whole, Great, Little and White Russia; Monarch of Moscow, Kiev, Vladimir, and Novgorod; Great Duke of Smolensk, Tver, etc."

So far these are the older, familiar titles of the great princes of Moscow who had become tsars of Rus. But Ides adds other titles of lands and peoples beyond and below the Volga.

". . . Tsar of Kazan, Tsar of Astrakhan, Tsar of Sibir; Lord of . . . Iugoria, Perm, Bulgar, etc. Lord and mighty Prince of . . . the Ob, the Kond *and of the whole North* [Frozen] Sea; Commander and Lord of the . . . Karthlian princes, the Kabardian dominions, the Cherkassian princes [of the Caucasus mountains] . . . and many other lands and territories, extending East, West and North, the Inheritance of his Ancestors."

This list the politic Isbrant Ides had obtained from the Bureau of Ceremony at Moscow. It was a grave offense for a foreigner to omit any part of the imperial title. Upon many of these regions written down as inherited, Moscow had only the trace of a claim. In fact a little further on in his dedication Ides writes ". . . your Imperial Majesty's Dominions beyond Europe are for the most part unknown."

Upon such "dominions beyond Europe" the authority of Moscow had been superimposed but not welded fast upon the peoples. Ides, aware of that, hesitates in writing it down but manages cleverly enough to get it into words that would flatter the tsar. "My principal aim . . . is to give the whole

World to know, that besides your Imperial Majesty's known Powerful Monarchy [i.e., Muscovy] there are many other unknown foreign countries . . . and adjacent peoples who in effect owe their safety and security to your Tsarish Majesty's good will and in course of time cannot avoid bowing down and paying due homage to your Imperial Majesty's Sovereign Authority."

In this phrasing Ides achieves something like a triumph of diplomacy. Those nearby peoples who are "in effect" indebted to the young monarch's benevolence will inevitably "in course of time" acknowledge their subjection. Of course the personality of the real Peter means nothing to the Dutch courtier. If the idiot Ivan had been tsar, Ides would have written the same words except for the name. (In fact he started to address his dedication to the two brothers, but Ivan died.) He was really eulogizing the Muscovite state, of which Peter was titular head.

No, Peter could not have been aware of the persistent migration of his own people of Muscovy—under Moscow's authority—away from Moscow into the east.

When Peter made his next journey it was not to the east but to the south. And it happened quite naturally.

### *The Ships Go Down to Azov*

At the start of a balmy summer Bombardier Peter marched with his jolly "men of play" down the pleasant river Don to capture Azov from the Turks.

The idea had hardly originated with Peter himself. It was an old idea, to go against the ghost of Batu Khan. Even the clear-reasoning Krijanich had written: ". . . wars with Poles and Lithuanians have been unprofitable. In our efforts against the Tatars the Lord has given us success in Kazan, Astrakhan and in Siberia . . . it is advisable for this land to keep peace with all the Northern, Eastern and Western Peoples."

In the south lay the Tatar and Turkish folk, holding, among other things, the fortified town of Azov that closed the wide mouth of the Don. For centuries the folk of Rus had been pushing out, along their rivers, to gain access to the sea. (And

Peter had just come down from the lonely little port of Archangel that gave access only to the frozen White Sea.)

Peter, unlike Alexis, had not read Krijanich. But he had heard of the effort of the Great Galitzin to conquer the southern steppe. Galitzin had wanted to strike a blow at the Tatar-Turk because that was the endeavor of the European powers at the time, and because he had not wished the Poles, after the spectacular victory of John Sobiesky at Vienna, to have the sole credit for liberating the Balkan peoples from the Tatar-Turk.

While the Polish monarchial republic was sunning itself in one of its years of glory, the Muscovites were in darkest shadow. Galitzin's failure was remembered; from the restless Ukraine the Cossack hetman, Mazeppa, sent warning that Muscovy must accomplish *something*; in Constantinople—that Galitzin had dreamed of entering—the Turkish sultans did not mention the name, let alone the many titles, of the Tsar of All of Rus.

All this was talked about in Moscow. Moreover, popular opinion was growing skeptical about Peter Alexeivich. Not entirely because he had absented himself among tobacco-smoking strangers; Alexis himself had visited the houses of such strangers, incognito. But Alexis had shown the light of his eyes to his people; many times he had listened to them and tried to make conditions easier for them. When had his son ever done that?

So long as Natalia and the patriarch Joachim had lived, the old ways had been followed in the Kremlin. Now Peter, the son of Alexis, hid himself away in the pleasure house of a stranger whose women ran about the house naked, like girls in a hot bath, like *lieshi* of the marshes!

And apparently his advisers impressed on Peter the need of showing leadership, in the public eye. It suited Peter perfectly to journey away from Moscow with his new regiments of Pressburg to a real campaign, to please the old soldier, his friend Patrick Ivanovich, and to command the sullen Streltsi. They would not make the mistake of Galitzin, of venturing into the dry steppe; they would march with plenty of cannon along the merry river Don. Peter's best minds would com-



mand—Lefort, Gordon, Golovin the diplomat; and Peter himself would go as bombardier . . . actually he went also as Skipper Peter, embarking on makeshift sailing barges to journey almost all the way by water, down the Volga, to Tsaritsyn and thence by portage to the Don.

In the frosts of November the motley field army was back again in Moscow—most of it. There was no victory parade, and the Turks, it seemed, were still in Azov. The Transfiguration and Semenov and the Streltsi regiments had not been able to capture a single trench at Azov. Peter laid the blame for the failure on his German master of artillery, who had deserted to the Turks.

Stubbornly he made sure that the army would not fail a second time. Hastily his advisers appealed to the European courts for experts in capturing fortresses. Vienna responded with an artillery specialist, and one in mines. Königsberg sent a similar staff, Holland furnished artillerymen, Venice an admiral, with a model of a sailing galley. From the Dnieper the Zaporogian Cossacks were summoned with their long saicks. For Peter had never seen an actual warship.

Down on the Veronezh River, which flows into the Don, soldiers, peasants, and Dutch carpenters were crowded into the marshes that winter to build shipways. Out of green wood shaped by unskilled hands lacking serviceable tools, some odd-looking vessels were put together. The toy squadron on the "little sea" of Pereiaslavl had proved useless.

Peter worked without rest, drawing on the experience he had gained at Archangel, despondent and exultant by turns. Out of the failure at Azov he had gained one clear conviction, that the town would have to be cut off from the sea by the ships he was building.

"Like Adam," he wrote to the Sloboda, "I eat my bread in the sweat of my brow." Lefort sent him good beer and French wine.

In the spring, with high water and warm weather, Peter's spirits rose. Lefort, he announced, would be admiral of the new fleet; the largest galley should be christened the *Principium*, and Skipper Peter Alexeivich would navigate it. With

two brigs of shallow Dutch design, four large galleys with raking yards of Venetian type, and four small craft to serve as fire ships, he set sail again.

The second siege of Azov still revealed immaturity in Skipper Peter, still showed the imprint of Pressburg upon those who served under him.

Since they numbered more than thirty thousand they had no difficulty in surrounding the low hillock of Azov. The flotilla blockaded the town, keeping off Turkish relief from the Black Sea. Yet there matters rested. The Streltsi officers advised building a great ramp of earth against the wall of the town, pushing it nearer by adding more earth until the wall could be rushed. Gordon preferred to batter down a part of the wall with artillery fire, but the cannon smoked and thundered without visible result, until an unexpected counterattack by the Turks in the town spiked the best of the guns. . . . Then the belated German artillery experts arrived, smiling at the half-finished earth ramp and the spiked batteries. . . . The Zaporogian Cossacks in their saicks stormed the river-bank.

Before then the tsar-commander had secluded himself in Gordon's tent, in the depth of despondency. At the Cossacks' success, his spirits rebounded.

In boyish glee Peter wrote to his sister Natalia, who scolded him for risking himself among bullets: "Little sister, I am obeying you. I do not go to meet the shells and bullets; it is they who come to meet me."

Outnumbered and cut off from relief, the Turkish garrison surrendered, with the honors of war.

To Peter's mind the victory was complete. His regiments had not only won a battle, they had prevailed over the formidable Turks on the historic Black Sea, and freed the great river Don.<sup>4</sup> Eagerly, aided by his new engineering staff, he blocked out the site of a better port, which was christened Taganrog. Happily he wrote to his old companion, the King of Pressburg, "*Mein Keneg*—Your Majesty will hear how God has favored your army. The people of Azov have surrendered."

Having sent the news to the mock king, the real king made the rounds of his conquest in a whirlwind of activity. At the great bend of the Don where the Cossacks had long been accustomed to drag their saicks through the marsh and up over the rise to the Volga, Peter planned to excavate a canal. To do this properly, he would send for more experts from Venice and Holland.

With such physical activity he was well content. His imagination enlarged upon the canal. With the Don and Volga linked together, ships could pass from the Black Sea to the Caspian, from these landlocked seas up to Voronezh, and from that center of the new shipbuilding up to Moscow itself. More cargo craft would be needed, new designs. . . .

Azov, fortified, would be the port of the new colony. Two or even three thousand peasant families would be moved down from the north, while the useful Cossacks could have their suburbs in the islands. To add strength, four hundred of the nomad Kalmuks—those wanderers from the east—could be quartered outside the walls, while two regiments of Muscovite Streltsi served as permanent garrison. . . .

This time the return to Moscow was celebrated. In the cathedral the great bell tolled. In the Red Place a triumphal arch rose hurriedly. On one column of the arch a giant Hercules trampled three Turks; on the other column Mars stood upon three prostrate Tatars. At the head of the procession that passed under the arch Admiral Lefort rode in a gilded sled. Behind him, carrying only the pike that was his proper weapon, walked Bombardier Peter, now promoted to be captain.

The crowd liked it. The new patriarch blessed the returning soldiers for vanquishing the infidels. Old folks nodded, murmuring, "*Lybuko*—it pleases us." So it had been, the *bylini* singers said, when the great Tsar Ivan rode back from the conquest of Kazan.

The higher clergy and the boyar families were not so pleased when they learned in their council that the expense of new frigates would be levied on them; the richer merchants would pay for bomb ketches and fire ships. In all a fleet of sixty-four sail was to be built for the southern seas—one ship

to every eight thousand souls around Moscow. And fifty sons of boyars would be sent to learn navigation and shipbuilding in Venice and Holland.

Peter Alexeivich, too, was pleased with himself, ingenuously. He visited Eudoxia, the discarded woman who was still his wife, and still Tsaritsa of Rus. In the Sloboda he went straight to the vintner's daughter. Both women had borne him children. Now the vintner's daughter nagged him about her small cottage; it was a shabby affair, not even comfortable; she needed a respectable *house*, no palace like the Swiss admiral's, but a dwelling with a stove in every room, where she could entertain guests and make Peter and the children comfortable. He built it for her.

The vintners daughter, Anna Mons, had belonged to the irresponsible Peter for eight years. Hers was a more sensitive mind than his. By now she understood that she would have neither love nor recognition from the young master of Rus. With a house of her own she could turn her attention to other men, unknown to Peter.

For Peter was displaying a stubborn loyalty to his Sloboda companions. Each one who had shared his life possessed a claim, as it were, upon him. Although he rarely spent two days with the patrician Eudoxia, he was gentle with her.

Down at the Don's mouth, however, the young master of Rus had displayed a peculiarity. Driving about headlong in his carriage, he had examined into *things* rather than people. Passing through the Cossack *stanitzas* with their whitewashed cottages nestled in ravines, he had looked out at mills or cattle herds. Somehow he had been afraid to go among the folk of the cottages. By traveling among them so swiftly he withheld his own anxiety from them, and prevented them from voicing their anxieties in the incomprehensible Ukrainian speech.

Perhaps Peter put these Ukrainians out of his mind because he thought of them as Mazeppa's people.

For Mazeppa the boy Peter had one of his swift infatuations. The hetman of the Ukraine, more than twice Peter's age, gray-haired, gifted with wit and speech, riding his splendid horse like a centaur, could control the wild masses of the

Cossack Hosts. Like a wise old eagle he could gaze out over the steppe and sense danger unseen by other eyes.

He knew the ways of the Poles, because he had served at their court and learned the new science in their colleges. To the Zaporogians he had come as a fugitive, to make himself somehow their treasurer and adviser. Now he gave away wealth with both hands, building churches and palaces where he wished.

What matter if once he had been driven from the estate of a Polish noble, stripped naked? The wife of the Pole had been bewitching, it was said. Mazeppa's eyes had power to make a woman follow him. What matter if he were greedy for wealth and honors, unlike the ancient hetmans of the Hosts? Wealth and honors flowed to him as if by magic. Peter bestowed a decoration on him, shyly.

Probably Peter never knew the whole truth of how Mazeppa became hetman by order of the Great Galitzin, after he had damned his predecessor Samoilovich, offering him up to Galitzin as a scapegoat, while making a royal gift of gold to the Muscovite. If he heard something of that, Peter did not care, because he was fascinated by Mazeppa. . . .

No, Peter was satisfied that the restless Ukraine was safe in Mazeppa's hands.

When he heard of the capture of Azov, Isbrant Ides added a new eulogy to his dedication. "Your Tsarish Majesty's Men-of-War and imposing Galleys have struck such a terror into the Mouth of the Don, which has been closed for some Years, that now it opens of itself; by which means the Black Sea is made accessible and gives communication Southward and Westward with the Mediterranean."

The politic Dutchman added another thought, perhaps hoping for a new commission for himself. "And the *Caspian* Sea, which to the amazement of all Naturalists has no visible communication with the Ocean, waits only for the honor of being covered and adorned by your Majesty's Naval Force, in order to give an In-let and Out-let to immense Treasures in the course of a regulated Trade to the *East*."

The Caspian Sea was to wait many years for this honor and Ides was not to get another caravan to the east.

### *Atlasov's Sixty Cossacks*

While the courtier Ides was writing his supplication and the city of Moscow was celebrating the freeing of the Don and the recapture of Azov, a step was taken outward at the far end of the continent.

Vladimir Atlasov had the job of fur checker at the Anadir blockhouse, in the mist of the polar sea, the easternmost outpost of the empire. Like Khabarov, this fur checker had a knack of doing business for himself. The desolation of his post was only equaled by the scarcity of its fur intake. Atlasov had been sifting the colorful tales brought in by wanderers from the "new land" that stretched into the open sea south of him. It was a case of the fabulous river Pogicha all over again.

This "new land" was guarded by warlike people who lived on and by reindeer, who had firearms, who took rich "sea otter" furs from the sea, who cherished a manuscript that no one could read, washed up by the sea in some fashion known only to God. . . .

Journeying to the nearest Siberian terminal, Yakutsk, Vladimir Atlasov tried to persuade the voevode, who was a German, to give him men and supplies for an expedition into this new land of Kamchatka jutting into the sea. Failing to persuade the voevode, Atlasov borrowed money himself in Yakutsk, bought some supplies, and thus equipped, picked up the more restless cossacks between Yakutsk and the coast. He got sixty men to follow him, and added as many friendly natives, Yukaghirs.

Being experienced in such matters, the small expedition acquired reindeer to draw the sleds, and to provide milk and meat for the men. By giving presents and using arguments, Vladimir Atlasov felt his way through the Koriaks, the tribal group guarding the mountainous entrance to the new land. These Koriaks, like many of the ancient Siberian peoples, had a way of going berserk and attacking the Russians, of killing themselves and their wives and children rather than submit to the foreigners.

Splitting his small force into two parties, to advance along the coasts below the mountain spine of the Kamchatka peninsula, Atlasov penetrated where no Europeans had set foot before. He and his men were soon fighting for their lives, against the Yukaghirs, who turned on them, moved by a silent impulse to resist, and against the Koriaks, who raided the Russian reindeer herds.

By getting his scattered parties together and by overawing the people of Kamchatka itself, the Kamchadals, Atlasov was able to explore almost to the southern end of the new land. This being unravished hunting ground, he gained a rich toll of fox furs and "sea otters."

More than that, he got a mysterious manuscript guarded by the superstitious Kamchadals, and also by happy accident a shipwrecked stranger who could read it. Both the writing and the man turned out to be Japanese. Not that Atlasov's party identified him as Japanese. The natives had called him a Russian, and obviously he was not that, although just as obviously superior in intelligence to the Kamchadals. Moreover he had come in a boat. So Atlasov kept him as a curiosity.

Another curiosity was the persistent talk of the Kamchadals about islands, a chain of islands stretching toward the sun. On clear days the explorers sighted the blur of land lying where the natives pointed, to the south. These were to be identified later as the Kurils, leading in turn to the larger islands of Japan.

The Kamchadals chattered about other islands, also forming a chain, stretching into the northern mists. But these—the Aleutians—the explorers did not see.

They had no knowledge of the newly explored continent lying beyond the Aleutians. Although that continent of the Americas had been written large upon the maps of such clever Dutchmen as Abraham Ortelius and Willem Blaeu, the maps printed in Amsterdam had not penetrated to Siberia, much less to desolate Yakutsk.

One find dwarfed all others in the minds of Atlasov's men. The sables of Kamchatka had luxuriant, valuable fur. Quantities of these pelts were taken and packed. Atlasov decided that he must hold his peninsula. Carefully he drew rough maps,

and set up a cross, carving on it his identification, "The free adventurer Vladimir Atlasov and his comrades."

Since he was running out of men and—more important—out of ammunition, Atlasov had to return to the mainland for support. Building an ostrog near the river and leaving there half his survivors, he started back with fifteen cossacks and four Yukaghirs, to retrace his journey of eighteen hundred miles, crossing an arm of the sea in skin boats, crossing the barren mountain ranges with the aid of reindeer.

At Yakutsk, trusting neither the voevode nor the Sibirsky Prikaz, Atlasov decided to keep on journeying, to report his exploration of the new land to the tsar in Moscow. To give importance to his labors he took along as gifts more than six thousand sables and ten "sea otters." By then, in June 1700, he heard that the new tsar had a liking for curiosities. So he took along as well the shipwrecked man who seemed to have the name of Denbe.

Behind the thirty thousand souls of the tsar's army on the river Don and the sixty comrades of the adventurer Atlasov there had been the same compelling force, straining to free the course of a river by pushing to the end of land itself, even to the islands beyond the land. The army and the reindeer-keeping buccaneers had been part of the migration that was thrusting through barriers toward the outer seas of Eurasia.

In Moscow Peter lost the ebullition of the campaign in the open steppe. Old tensions gripped him. Observers say that when he put on the heavy regalia of the tsars to receive ambassadors he became flushed and wet with sweat; after a while he forgot his prescribed speeches and said anything that came into his head.

Informers from the streets told his companions of a persistent antagonism among groups of the Streltsi, who had relished neither their hard labor at shipbuilding in the swamps nor the long marches into the steppe, and among Old Believers, who asked what was in the heart of the tsar, to avoid his wife and drink wine with heretics. And among boyars who asked why



foreigners were set over them, and why they had to find the money for sixty-four new ships.

A conspiracy there was, in that year 1697, and it found Peter unprepared, yet its details remain very obscure. The commonest story is that a certain Truikler, an old henchman of Sophia's, had met with two boyars, Old Believers both, to try to capture Peter with the aid of some Streltsi. Word of their meeting was brought hurriedly to the tsar, as he dined at Lefort's. Thereupon, so the tale runs, Peter quickly excused himself and walked alone to the house of Truikler and his associates, sat down with them, filling them with consternation until a guard detachment arrived to arrest them. Whereupon Peter went back to his interrupted dinner.

This version of the capture of the conspirators did not mention the circumstance that Peter had been dead drunk that evening.

Whatever actually happened, Truikler and two boyars were hung up and hacked to pieces in the Red Place. There was no public mention of Sophia. But orders were given to dig out the body of Ivan Miloslavsky, her nearest of kin, from its grave—to have it dragged by swine to the place of execution and left beneath the bleeding bodies of the men newly condemned.

Peter had insisted on that. Before their deaths Truikler and his companions had been tortured. They had confessed fully, first that they had shared in the earlier Shakovity conspiracy, second that they had intended to kill the tsar and blame the foreigners publicly for the crime. Some of Peter's advisers had shaken their heads over such confessions, but Peter had remembered the thrusting hands of the Streltsi and the menacing faces of the Old Believers. After that he agreed to go on the tour of Europe.

This journey François Lefort had been urging since Azov. By it he hoped to accomplish several things, to provide his master with an escape from the tension in Moscow, to allow Peter to see himself the manners and inventions of the west, so often discussed in the Sloboda, and probably to enhance the importance of François Lefort. Before then, of course, no

tsar of Moscow had ventured beyond his frontier. But Peter was the man to break such precedents.

Surely the time favored the move. In the square at Warsaw crowds had shouted "*Vivat!*" at the tidings from Azov. The Muscovites and Galitzin had taken the first hesitating step toward the concert of European courts. Lefort understood as few others did how Peter reacted quickly and sensitively to what was near him, while remaining dull to events elsewhere.

The deaths of Natalia, Joachim, and the imbecile Ivan had left a vacuum. They had been at least the figureheads of the rule of the old tsars. With Eudoxia put aside, Peter no longer had a visible tie with Alexis' dynasty. Already the populace argued that he was no true son of Alexis but a bastard fathered by some German foreigner, perhaps by Lefort himself. This, Lefort believed, could be traced to Sophia. Instinctively he felt that the uncertain Peter could not continue as he was—that he must either step back into old usage, or step out into new.

Peter himself hung back at the prospect of venturing into the physical life of the west. Yet he trusted the Swiss adventurer and after the Truikler disturbance he agreed to go. The journey, however, must take him to northern ports like Archangel, to the ports where ships were built, to the home of Franz Timmermann. Moreover he would not cross the frontier as tsar; Lefort as admiral and Golovin as chancellor must be the official figures of the party—some kind of ambassadors at large—while Captain Peter, hidden under another name, would go as one of their attendants.

### III

## THE TOUR OF EUROPE AND THE INVASION

### *The Great Embassy*

IN THE early spring of 1697 the Baltic coast had recovered from the ravages of the Thirty Years' War of fifty years before. Its neat harbors and renovated castles reflected the rococo tranquillity of its gentry, the herzogs, electors, stateholders, burgomasters, duchesses, and all their conveniently married kindred. Universities at Upsala and Lübeck reflected, not too brilliantly, the pseudo-scientific spirit of a generation that had barely digested, with its ample dinners, the irritable expositions of a Tycho Brahe, the courtly letters of a Gottfried Leibnitz—not yet *Reichsfreiherr* Leibnitz—who had managed to reconcile the concepts of Plato with the new concept of particles of force that moved the universe.

These noble families of the Baltic were accustomed to princes who might visit them incognito. Rarely did such a prince travel as a person actually unknown; usually he came after due notice that his visit was to be off the record, attended by an aid and perhaps a valet. Under such transparent disguise, this monsieur could discuss politics without hindrance, or perhaps visit a lady of his acquaintance.

That same spring the Great Embassy from Moscow appeared at the gate of Riga, its first objective upon the Baltic, with only a cryptic warning that its visit would be of great importance. In the gate appeared first Cossack outriders and troops of guardsmen on matched horses, followed by a clarion blast from trumpets and drums, and halberdiers in close array with other imperial guardsmen bearing the silvered axes of ancient Rus. The trio of ambassadors shone with embroidered

cloth of gold edged with the costliest furs. Behind them rode dark Kalmuk horsemen, trailed by a detachment of dwarfs, by body servants, cupbearers, and grooms—more than two hundred souls in all.

The impact of this visitation upon orderly Riga was very great. Quarters provided for the Great Embassy proved insufficient, the food unacceptable. The greeting was worst of all, because the Swedish military governor, a certain Graf Dahlberg, decided to avoid the Great Embassy by playing sick.

The situation worsened when a roughly dressed seaman, Peter Mikhailov by name, went his rounds of the neat city, staring at the steeples of the Komm and the St. Peter, sampling the beer in the *Weingartens*, and insisting upon going over the bastions and fortifications of the castle itself. Impassive Swedish officers turned him away, whereupon hurried messages came from the ambassadors hinting that the giant seaman might be perhaps an Exalted Personage.

"The tsar?" retorted Dahlberg. "You informed me that the tsar was at Voronezh with his ships."

Other more agitated messages from Lefort and Golovin had no greater effect on the Graf. The Swedes chose to believe that the Muscovite circus was a bit of trickery. In consequence Skipper Peter Mikhailov did not get inside the fort.

Before that, no door had been barred to Peter. He did not forget the Swedes at Riga.

By the time the Great Embassy had paraded on to Königsberg in the sandy woods of Prussia, his identity was pretty well known. Letters got ahead of him, describing the tsar—"Tall, with his head shaking, his right arm never still and a wart on his cheek." The Prussian colonel at Königsberg accepted Peter with a straight face, and taught him a deal about the way to fire cannon. When the giant seaman chose to spend the night in a wine garden or to remain out of sight in his quarters while beer flowed and voices roared, the Prussians (Brandenburgers) made no bones about it. Once when a servant dropped a plate at a banquet, Peter sprang up, his face convulsed.

Often he entertained his Prussian hosts by displaying his skill at beating a drum.

At the end of his stay the colonel presented him with a certificate that: "Peter Mikhailov may now be accepted as a skilled master of fire weapons."

Yet the celebrated Leibnitz failed to get past Peter's attendants to talk with him. Peter Mikhailov, it seemed, would talk with strangers only about shipbuilding and gunnery and such matters. In fact Peter turned his back when anyone spoke the forbidden word "Sire."

Nothing could have made him more conspicuous than his incognito. A Muscovite tsar with the mind of a boy and the manners of a bear at table, subject besides to extraordinary convulsions, to claustrophobia when put into a small chamber and to rage when he was quartered in a place with high ceilings—this phenomenon stirred the curiosity of the nobility throughout the German states. The Electresses of Brandenburg and Hanover were "dying of curiosity to see him."

At the castle of Koppenbrügge Peter agreed to meet and sup with these ladies. Probably he was curious, as well, to examine European ladies other than the easygoing women of the Sloboda. But when he found the building crowded with people he retreated hastily into the village. When he was persuaded to enter the reception room he covered his face with his hands, muttering in German, "I can't speak! I can't speak!"

This is his old dread of strange people. When he is joined by some of his companions, he manages better. In the courtyard he drinks some wine quietly, and goes in to the table. He does not know what to do with his napkin and forks. To the time-honored question of all bothered hostesses—what does he like best to do?—he answers bluntly, "I have no liking for games, for hunting, or music. I like shipbuilding and fire-works." By way of proof he shows his calloused hands.

He does not come off badly, speaking a strange language, under the sharp eyes of the electresses. One describes him as having a nice brown skin and dark luminous eyes, looking tired and a bit debauched, wildly timid and twitching uncontrollably. "If he were educated, his would be a fine mind, for he has a quick understanding, and natural wit."

Once at his ease, Peter really entertains the ladies, keeping

them four hours at table, drinking toasts. Afterward, despite his dislike of European music, he listens quietly to an Italian singer, and calls in one of his own jesters to amuse the ladies. Seeing quickly that they are not amused, he catches up a broom, and beats the jester from the room.

He wishes to see the German ladies dance. The officers of his suite who dance with them are mystified by the corsets and whalebone stays that they feel upon the backs of their partners. "The bones of these Germans are devilish hard," they tell Peter.

At such times his reactions are instinctive. Entering the laboratory of Ruisch, the anatomist, he looks first at the body of a young girl, laid out so carefully she seems to be smiling in her sleep. He walks over and kisses her.

Later, he is fascinated by the anatomical theater of Boerhaave, sitting there while bodies are dissected for students. Some of his Muscovites find this hard to watch, and when Peter notices their qualms he forces them to go up to the human bodies and operate on them with their teeth.

A critical Englishman, Bishop Burnet, writes of him: "He is a man of hot temper, soon inflamed and very brutal in his passion . . . he is subject to convulsive motions all over his body . . . he has a larger measure of knowledge than might be expected from his education.

"A want of judgment with an instability of temper appear in him too often and too evidently . . . ship carpentry was his chief study and exercise while he stayed here; he wrought much with his own hands, and made all about him work at the models of ships. He told me he designed a great fleet at Azuph [Azov] and with it to attack the Turkish Empire. . . . He seemed apprehensive still of his sister's intrigues. . . . He is resolute but understands little of war and seemed not at all inquisitive that way."

The good bishop, like the Electress of Brandenburg, perceives that Peter has a well-stored mind, even if badly educated. And he senses what few others realize in Peter. He is resolute, but *understands little of war*.

Peter himself signs a letter "From one who wishes to learn, and to share."

During the fourteen months' tour of the Great Embassy, Peter's obsession was shipbuilding. When he left the Embassy and sailed down the Rhine to the canals of Holland he found himself in a seaman's paradise. For a week under the alias of Carpenter Peter he tried staying at Saardam, the village that had been the home of his old friends in Pereiaslavl and Voronezh. Although he bought a small boat and lodged himself inconspicuously in a small cottage, he found the curiosity of the village too much for him and left to resume his transparent incognito with the Embassy at Amsterdam.

When he left Saardam he tossed fifty ducats to a servant girl who had amused him. Often he tried to pay his way with a few pennies, as if each one counted; then at times he left enormous sums behind him.

At Amsterdam he stayed interminably, feeling at ease with the kindly Dutch. Witzen, the explorer who had written *North and East Tartary*—who knew more about Siberia than the tsar—gave him access to the East Indiamen yards, and there Peter questioned experts, notebook in hand, bought treatises on navigation and naval law, and labored with the shipwrights. He mastered the use of simple instruments like compass and plane. But some of the jottings in his notebook would be hard to follow. One described laying down the keel of a ship: "After calculating roughly the area, start by making a right angle at both ends." He seemed to write as he spoke, bluntly, hurriedly—the words making more sense to him than to others.

There at Amsterdam Peter and his Russians may have built a full-rigged ship with their own labor. But it is certain that William III, aware of his ruling passion by then, ordered a twenty-four gun yacht to be made for the tsar and fully equipped. Upon this vessel, later on, Peter packed all his purchases for shipment to Archangel.

There Peter investigated the sights and the newer sciences with all his enthusiasm and unlimited energy, measuring bridges, attending lectures on mechanics, as well as anatomy, taking drawing lessons, watching portrait painters at work. At a sawmill he nearly crippled himself by trying to stop the

works, and he fared no better when he investigated the driving wheel of a silk factory.

"He is a good carpenter," the workmen said of him when he left, "and he knows something about building a ship."

By instinct he seemed to feel that he needed to learn first how things were made, and how they worked. Their use he could worry out later. Perhaps remembering Azov—like most self-taught men, Peter had an almost indelible memory—he investigated all the fortresses while filling his notebook with the advice of experts on siege warfare.

He left little trace of his visit in the dry records of the Dutch States-General. The principal entry concerning Peter listed only the heavy expense, one hundred thousand florins, of entertaining the Great Embassy for so long. After a few years the Dutch were to express a much harsher opinion of Peter than they had done during his visit. And that opinion was to be shared by William III, the Hollander-born, who was then King of England.

England was prepared for the tsar when he crossed the Channel for a three months' stay in London. It was really a personal visit, almost incognito. The Great Embassy remained on the Continent and the tsar-tourist contented himself with a small suite of fifteen men. According to the English, he had discovered that, while the Dutch shipwrights were handy enough, only the English could teach him the art of shipbuilding from plans.

Certainly they ferried him across the Channel in style, on a royal yacht escorted by men-of-war.

And certainly Peter was taken to see all the curiosities of the city, the Tower, the Mint, and the Observatory. With William he was at ease, talking freely in Dutch. The two monarchs, prematurely sagacious, and forced to undertake great responsibilities, had certain traits in common. Peter was becoming aware of the stubborn fact faced by William—that power upon the sea could alter a nation's destiny. It seems that Peter was attracted by the young Princess Anne, whom he described as a religious child. His fancy was caught more by a miniature weather vane than by the royal collection of



paintings. His curiosity was stirred by a microscope and by a giantess under whose outstretched arm even he could walk.

To the Londoners this giant from the steppes of Asia, as they conceived Peter to be, appeared even more of a curiosity. Apparently the hostesses of city society did not accept him as readily as the electresses of the Baltic. Anecdotes grew up around his passing. The Muscovites, so it was said, lived in unbreathable air, with all the windows of their quarters shut tight. They raved like animals when drunk.

(Peter wrote to his King of Pressburg that they "made merry" only at times; he mourned for the three-day feasts of the Sloboda.)

Having heard by then of the servant girl of Saardam, his hosts supplied him with an actress for companion. Gossip related with zest how the Muscovite tsar paid her off with a mean sum and, when reproached for his stinginess, retorted that he had hired people enough to know what they were worth. And the actress, he added, with full anatomical details, was worth no more than she had been paid. Whereupon he wagered the same amount on the prowess of one of his Cossack servants matched against an English prizefighter, and won the money back.

The house of John Evelyn, lent to Peter while he visited the shipping at Deptford, became another scandal. After Peter's departure it looked as if "Tartars had camped there"—with doors torn out, hangings torn down, fine paintings riddled by bullets, and lawns trampled as if by passing regiments. The damage was estimated at three hundred and fifty pounds.

Tradition relates that Peter left a huge uncut diamond wrapped in a piece of soiled paper to pay for the damages.

Yet Peter enjoyed here one of the most magnificent spectacles of his life. Off Spithead a sham sea battle was held in his honor. He watched real line-of-battle ships maneuvering and firing broadsides. This spectacle he never forgot.

*The Hired Minds*

Nor did his European hosts ever forget their extraordinary guest. Peter's *Wanderjahre* left a lasting impress of confusion on the courts that were obliged to welcome him. At times they could not find him, and at times he appeared where he was least expected, because his chronic shyness drove him away from assembled groups.

Once at Amsterdam he refused to leave the audience chamber until the throng of people in the anteroom had turned their faces to the wall. He eluded reception committees, to turn up in the alleys of a town; he refused quarters in a palatial building, to pass on through the town and settle himself in a small cottage outside. Again, he deserted a stately bedroom, to climb the stairs and throw himself down in a cubby under the roof. "Our tsar," his companions explained, "cannot stomach a lofty dwelling." Some days he preferred to sleep or to "make merry." Some nights he chose to inspect the museums and curios of a city.

On the road, he would stop all progress to examine ferries, windmills, or canals operated by locks. But always and everywhere he saturated himself with the sights of the west. His interest lay markedly in mechanical operations, and he watched, fascinated, the difficult operation of pressing pulp into paper, weaving silk by machine, or metal engraving. Not that he mastered such processes.

Except for the masters of workrooms and laboratories, he rather shunned men of learning. Leibnitz tried in vain to talk to him, and had to write him from a distance. Peter was no Frederick of Prussia in search of a Voltaire;<sup>1</sup> he remained as he had been, the pupil of Zotov, and the boon companion of that other mighty reveler, François Lefort. Galleries of art and men of intellect tired him. Nicholas Witzen, who had hoped for much from his visit, was invoked only to help Peter in the shipyards. Masters of academic learning in the universities of Leyden, Upsala, Oxford, and Cambridge seem to have remained strangers to the visitor from the east.

And in Peter's case a little knowledge often proved to be a

dangerous thing. He did take away dental forceps after watching a dentist extract teeth, and with the forceps he practiced dentistry himself after returning to Moscow. There he amused himself pulling teeth, whether good or bad—teeth that he kept carefully in a bag. The surgical instruments he carried back did more damage. At least once he tried operating himself in Moscow, upon a woman with the dropsy, who resisted the operation and died from its effects.

Much information picked up in his first year's European tour did stick in Peter's mind. Unexpectedly later on he revealed an interest in Quakers, in court prostitutes, in hospitals, in mathematics, and in alcohol as a preservative for parts of the human body. His engrossing interest lay in everything connected with ships, gunpowder, and forts—as at Pressburg and Pereiaslavl.

What Peter actually did in this remarkable journey was to get the sense of the west. He tried to understand its thought and to master its skills sufficiently to demonstrate what he had learned to the folk of Muscovy. Probably at the start of the journey he had not been prepared to do as Lefort advised, to take his next step toward the west. At the end of the journey he seemed determined to do so.

Apart from Peter's own culture gathering, the Great Embassy had a very tangible purpose. In its secret instructions it was required to ransack every country visited for "naval officers who have won rank through ability alone."

While Peter satiated himself with public sight-seeing, the others of the embassy bargained for the services of a whole naval personnel. They hired and shipped to Archangel or back through Riga boatswains, admirals, commanders, pilots, surgeons, cooks, and ordinary seamen—more than four hundred in all.

A Scottish major general, George Ogilvy by name, was recruited from Vienna. A noted Italian physician joined the recruits. In England Peter himself may have hired the "mining masters" destined for the new mines in the Urals, and engineers to construct his Don-Volga canal.

He certainly hired a Portuguese cabin boy, Devier, whose antics pleased him.

This draft of minds totaled more than nine hundred before the journey ended. Many of them voyaged east on the new galiot-yacht, the gift of the Dutch. Such skilled workmen of course required tools. Peter supervised the purchase of nautical instruments, cabinetmakers' tools, sailcloth, and every variety of firearms. These were packed in crates marked PM—Peter Mikhailov. In one of the crates appeared a stuffed crocodile.

Worthy Bishop Burnet wrote, "He was indeed resolved to draw strangers to come and live among them [his people]."

At the end of his résumé of the character of this strange tsar the bishop indulged in a bit of thoughtful soul searching. How was it possible to comprehend the omniscience of God, he wondered, if such a barbarian held power over such a great portion of mankind?

It never entered his mind that the tense, towering youth who battered the faces of his Muscovites when enraged did not possess such power.

### *Failure of the Mission*

The concealed purpose of this unusual mission had been to gain support in western Europe for the war begun by Moscow against the Turks. Hence the imposing dressing up, the silvered axes, the detachment of guards in German uniforms, the Kalmuk horsemen, the fanfare of trumpets and drums. The Embassy was intended to appear as one holding "the gorgeous east in fee." Actually, it had with it the three minds that held control over the Kremlin and hence over Moscow—Golovin's, Lefort's, and Peter's.

The adventure of the Turkish war had not been of Peter's devising. Circumstances had led him to Azov, and he was only following his advisers into western Europe to solicit aid because they felt the necessity of it.

In so doing he was taking a great risk. Behind him he had left only the erratic Boris Galitzin and the military commanders. This group had taken some precautions. Sophia had been closely guarded in her convent by dependable troops. The discontented Streltsi regiments had been transferred to

frontier posts, leaving Moscow under control of the regiments officered by foreigners and obedient to the elderly Gordon. On his own account, Peter had staged a demonstration of the grim deaths of conspirators in the Red Place on the eve of his departure.

Still, the three heads of the mission seemed to feel that they were journeying on borrowed time. Even at the start, at the Riga fortress and the pleasant castle of Koppenbrügge, the least suspect of the three, Peter himself, had been in close touch by letter with happenings in neighboring Poland, then going through the throes of uncertainty after the death of the revered Sobiesky.

All through the journey couriers, almost unnoticed in the scurrying about of the mission's outriders and lackeys, brought secret information on the situation in Moscow. This information came from a man as dependable as Gordon, from the King of Pressburg himself. Of his identity we will know more later. But he was also head of the little-mentioned Bureau of Secret Affairs, responsible for the torture of suspects and criminals.

Whether his messages were in code or hidden in accounts of banquets of the "All-Drunken Council" is not clear. He did send information, brief and to the point as Peter's own missives.

Even while at Deptford, "laboring without sleep at the craft of shipbuilding," Peter wrote to Moscow ordering Eudoxia to immolate herself in a convent.

Eudoxia, it seemed, had been murmuring against his long desertion. In Eudoxia was personified the passive force over which Peter had no control as yet, the will of the Russian people. The common people had no certainty about this tsar who never appeared at the head of the Red Stair, who raced about with foreigners like a madman.

"Who of us before now," the peasants and shopkeepers of Moscow asked each other, "has seen a tsar who forsook Holy Mother Moscow?"

"What Tsar of Rus before this one ever ventured among Germans or Turks?"

"Who of us dared to set foot on *ships* in the darkness of the outer seas?"

"Not only to outer seas but to the edge of the earth hath he gone. Aye, so, he hath clad himself in the semblance of a German merchant."

There was a deal of argument about that clothing, some of the folk holding that the son of Alexis had disguised himself as a boatman, others that he had taken on the semblance of a soldier. By then a few bits of news had trickled back from the Baltic. Since no means of communicating the facts of the Great Embassy to the people in the streets existed, the news, passing from man to man, became garbled into fantastic tidings.

Certain it was that the tsar had tried to escape. Obviously he had been caught. Being caught, he had been imprisoned. He had escaped from prison in the guise of a soldier—no, the real tsar had been put to death and a foreign soldier had appeared out of the prison cell in his stead—no, it was the queen of the Swedes who had bewitched him, changing his shape—no, the real soldier had died instead of the real tsar, who had tried to escape but had been caught by the Swedes and put into a barrel lined with nails and cast into the sea . . . the speakers were very sure about the nails. . . .

Much of this talk was overheard by informers. Some of it at least was reported, in the missives of the King of Pressburg, to Peter himself. It could not have added to his peace of mind.

But by then, in England, a greater anxiety gnawed at the shipwright of Deptford. While the plan of the Azov campaign had been the work of older heads, the building of the navy of the southern rivers had been Peter's concept, undertaken too hastily. True, the Duma had passed the measure, passively. Yet it was one thing to order seagoing fleets built on rivers, as Peter had reason to know, and quite another thing to get them built.

Hence his almost frantic search for a foreign personnel able to finish and navigate his cherished vessels. For Peter had his heart in this. By then the cost of the Great Embassy had risen to some two and a half million rubles, which had to be

paid eventually in gold or silver or trade. On the matter of payment, however, Peter—a true Slav—wasted no thought.

But he had no sea upon which to sail his fleet. At Pereiaslavl he had learned how hastily constructed lake vessels could not serve on the great rivers. Even Azov gave ships access only to the Sea of Azov, an area of marshes and salted shallows.

Beyond, the Black Sea was in the hands of the Turks and their corsairs. So was the Krim Peninsula with its port of Sevastopol. So was the mouth of the great river Dnieper. A campaign that would open up all the Black Sea coast to the new fleets would be beyond the means of Moscow.

The purpose of the Great Embassy was to gain allies for such a blow against the infidel Turks in the east. Had not Ivan the Terrible argued for such a crusade; had not the western nations formed a Holy League to repel the Turks? The ambassadors of Moscow had hurried west to resuscitate the war against the Padishah, the master of Constantinople.

When Peter had viewed the Spithead spectacle and had rejoined his Embassy at Antwerp, he discovered that it had failed to do anything of the kind.

Europe, it seemed, had ceased laying plans against the Turks years before. The Dalmatian coast and the upper Balkans had been liberated, Vienna made secure. The European concert had its eyes now upon the succession in Spain—the vital question as to which powers would control Spain. Besides, the Muscovite envoys had not had too good a hearing. They had been treated rather as unwelcome intruders.

By then, if not before then, Peter himself must have reflected upon the peculiarity of seagoing vessels—that such vessels had to go to sea where they were launched. They could not be moved, as the ancient river craft of Rus had been moved, from river to river inland, to bring them from the southern to the northern seas. That being the case, the new ships were destined to rot unless somehow the war against the Turk could be activated.

Caught in this dilemma, Peter turned excitedly as usual to physical action. Avoiding the area of French jurisdiction—which did not recognize his title as emperor as yet—he hur-

ried with the caravan of the Great Embassy through the middle German states, to pause only briefly for talks in Leipzig, the center of Saxony, and for picture gazing at Dresden. Then he swung south, to risk a visit to the great court of Vienna.

He wanted very much to stop at Venice, where serviceable war galleys were built at the Arsenal—a type suited to both rivers and sea—and where the oldest and almost the only foes of the Turkish Empire could be found. At the Signoria of Venice he fancied that the strange Muscovite envoys would be heard with understanding. For the merchants of Venice would be just as desirous to clear the Adriatic of Turkish corsairs as the Muscovites would be to clear the Black Sea. . . . But first a visit had to be paid to Vienna, the neighbor both of Venice and of Constantinople.

Even before it entered the outer gate of Vienna, the Great Embassy had its first intimidation. Its circuslike train of vehicles filled with servants, dwarfs, cooks, grooms, trumpeters, and other appendages was not greeted or allowed to make a formal entry into the metropolis of the Hapsburgs. Exasperated, Peter climbed into a cart and had himself driven into the gates.

The Hofburg with its nest of palaces repelled him as coldly as the outer city itself. Men sat in conference within the Hofburg who had defended those walls against the Turkish army. They were otherwise occupied at the moment. With Lefort, Peter wrote letters to them, and wandered around the streets of the great city, sight-seeing.

The inhabitants of the lofty Hofburg, it seemed, knew of no individual named Peter Mikhailov. One came at last to talk with Peter, and to discover discreetly what he desired.

"To speak with the emperor!" Peter burst out, Lefort interpreting.

"About what do you wish to speak?"

"About—" Peter caught himself. "About an important matter."

Evasion got him nowhere. The personage from the palace pointed out as if to a child that Peter's court had its ambassa-



dors at Vienna, to discuss any important matters of state. If so, then the ambassador should apply in due form to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stating the nature of the important matter—

For once the tsar-tourist assented meekly. Confused, he explained that he really had no important affair on his mind, he merely wished to greet the emperor privately.

In due course, as a casual visitor, he was admitted. Before the monarch of such distinguished lineage, Peter Mikhailov shows his anxiety, fumbling with his hat, not knowing what to say, although the adroit Lefort interprets for him. Once released from the interview, he sights a small boat on a miniature lake and hurries into it, to row around alone. . . .

A banquet follows, but his hosts still respect his incognito impassively. He is merely a distinguished visitor, without a mission to Vienna. Peter has a hard time with the forks and knives.

On his best behavior, he returns the courtesy by a banquet at his embassy, where fireworks are set off, and young women appear afterward in the garden who had not been seen at the table. Invited again, in turn, to a masked ball at the palace, he goes in the guise of a peasant . . . it is all very jolly and nothing important is said about the Turks. Vienna does not wish any more trouble with the armies of Islam.

As he is starting for Venice, defeated, Peter receives a message from Moscow. "The seed of the Miloslavskys has sprung up again."

At once he started back to Moscow by coach. He gave up his visit to Venice, the one place where he might have gained a hearing. The Great Embassy had failed in its mission.

### *Patrick Gordon at the Istra*

The four regiments of Streltsi that marched on Moscow in June 1698 had revolted. There was no doubt about that.

These particular regiments had been taken away from their families and their petty trade in Moscow to the salt marshes of Azov; from Azov they had been sent to the damp forests of the Lithuanian frontier. Then some few men who had

walked away to their home city returned with ominous reports—that the tsar had died in foreign lands, and foreigners were guarding the Kremlin.

So the four regiments left their posts and started home to set matters right.

Individuals among them had trouble later on in explaining the impulse that drove them. At the time it seemed clear enough. They may have numbered no more than twenty-two hundred. But restless groups of Old Believers joined them. At one time the marchers numbered six thousand or more.

Somebody read them a letter urging them to destroy the Sloboda and exterminate the heretics, the foreigners. The letter, they were told, came from the Tsarevna Sophia. They admitted that much in their testimony later, not under oath but under torment.

They reached the familiar Moskva River and hurried their pace because the golden domes of Moscow glinted ahead on the sky line. Then when they forded the Istra stream they found foreigners standing on the other bank, waiting to talk with them. Particularly the general known to them as Patrick Ivanovich talked with their leaders at the stream, urging them to surrender their weapons.

Patrick Ivanovich promised them a mass pardon if they surrendered themselves. The leaders of the Streltsi explained that they were going to kill the Germans and find the Great Galitzin, who had always been kind to them.

While Patrick Ivanovich talked with them, foreign regiments appeared on the knoll behind him. Then twenty-five cannon appeared, wheeled into place against the marchers. After that another Muscovite commander walked down to argue with them more sternly. To him they presented their list of grievances, written out in due form. The list related how—

Many Streltsi had been killed at Azov because of Lefort, a German and a heretic.

The four regiments had been issued bad meat.

They had been set to digging canals, trenches, roads, like peasants.

They intended to recapture Moscow from Lefort and the Germans.

Word had reached them that Tsar Romodanovsky (the King of Pressburg) meant to kill them if they laid down their arms.

After reading aloud the list of their grievances, some of them began to shout. The officers retired to the regiments from Moscow, which had taken position around the cannon by then. The marchers surged toward the knoll and the cannon blasted at them. After some fifty Streltsi had been killed or wounded, the others put down their arms, not knowing what to do.

Strangely enough, having surrendered themselves, they began to understand that they had sinned. They had gone against the command of the tsar to whom they had bowed their heads. Now they understood that, having done so, it was necessary for some of them to atone for the sin of the regiments.

Some of them, in fact, were tortured to discover who or what had driven them to rebel. Nothing more came out under the questioning than had been explained beforehand. A half dozen of the leaders were hanged by the road when the mass of them were marched off to a camp under guard.

Romodanovsky wrote to Peter: "While you amuse yourself by a big Drunk, we bathe ourselves in blood."

An answer came from Peter to treat the Streltsi severely. Romodanovsky, Gordon, and the other commanders decided to remove them from the camp, scattering them among the dungeons of the Kremlin and the monasteries around Moscow.

Until Peter's return authority rested in the hands of Prince Feodor Romodanovsky, otherwise the King of Pressburg. This remarkable individual held no other title, except that his family had been the executioners-by-torment of three generations of Romanovs. His family was one of the oldest in Rus, and he himself looked like a Tatar with his embroidered boots and long mustache. His integrity also was that of an oriental, never articulate but final. Romodanovsky scolded the tsar bit-

terly to his face, yet he served Peter with inflexible fidelity.

Peter called this boyhood companion the King of Pressburg as a jest. And, like most Slavs, Romodanovsky took his title seriously. Others held him in respect if not in awe, because as Romodanovsky served no interest but the tsar's, so he could speak with the tsar's voice. He had an army of servants, an array of glittering coaches, and a tame bear, kept at his door to greet visitors he disliked.

Did he serve as Peter's conscience? Or did Peter keep close to him this feudal potentate as a hold upon the mass of the people who resented a Lefort but could comprehend—as did the troubled Streltsi—a Romodanovsky? Probably Peter trusted him where he could trust no one else. Perhaps he saw reflected in Romodanovsky the inarticulate spirit of the elder time that was so much a part of Peter himself.

When Romodanovsky wrote: "The seed of the Miloslavskys has sprung up again," Peter understood the message perfectly, and hurried at the utmost speed of chaise and coach across the mountains to Kracow. There he intercepted another message. The Streltsi were imprisoned, Moscow laid under control.

Thereupon, that June, Peter lingered in Poland to try to repair the disaster to his mission.

At first Moscow, awaiting tensely the judgment of the tsar upon the revolt, heard only that he had been seen in the city—that he had gone to the new house of the vintner's daughter, and then to revel with Lefort.

### *Testimony of Johann Korb*

Peter had taken his step toward the west. When the people of Moscow saw their tsar by daylight they hardly recognized him, in a tousled court attire from Kracow, with a smoking pipe in his hand—a pipe that he put into his mouth.

Moreover, as if he were warmed by wine, Peter strode out of Lefort's house wielding a pair of shears. With the shears he began to clip the beards of the great boyars who bowed to him. At the same time he shouted that all who attended him must come with smooth faces like his own. Some who heard

him remembered that Peter had never grown hair on his own chin, and they thought the shearing to be a drunken jest. But he called his jesters and a tailor with other shears to cut the flowing sleeves from their kaftans, and by that they knew him to be in earnest, for he would not make two jests at the same time.

The older boyars wept at the shearing because they had known that only with their hair long, as God had fashioned them, could they hope for salvation at death—only demons went about with smooth faces.

And then Peter made clear to them how hard death could be. The folk of Moscow had thought the punishment of the Streltsi to be ended. Yet Peter would not be content with Romodanovsky's doing. He seemed to suspect that the men of the regiments had not confessed everything known to them about the Tsarevna Sophia. When he had them questioned again, those who had survived Romodanovsky's judgment were taken to all the fourteen torture rooms in the Kremlin cellars and Transfiguration.

Beggars who had taken alms at the Monastery of the Virgin, where Sophia dwelt, were found and fetched, with the serving-women of the place, to the fourteen rooms. Under the lash they screamed and whimpered, babbling incoherently. No least evidence came out of their agony that Sophia had conspired against her half brother, or that she had written to the Streltsi.

It seemed that one of the other princesses, Martha, had spoken bitterly against Peter, praying that he would cease to live.

Peter himself questioned Eudoxia, who had remained in Moscow after his order for her to retire to a convent. Why had she not done so? Narrow and superstitious though she was, like other women of her class, Eudoxia had spirit. There was neither evidence nor suspicion to connect her with the mutiny of the soldiers. Yet Peter had made up his mind by now to put her out of his life, and this could only be done if she became a nun, secluded by the vows of the Church.

He had her driven away from Moscow to a nunnery at Suzdal, although the patriarch himself interceded for her.

There the bishop refused to order Eudoxia to be sheared until Romodanovsky sent for him at night and talked with him.

The questioning over, Peter ordered the Streltsi to be given severe deaths, and he supervised the manner of it.

One disinterested observer wrote down in his journal the happenings of each day during the torment of the Streltsi. Johann Georg Korb,<sup>2</sup> an aide of the Austrian embassy, had not been long in Moscow and the sights stirred his curiosity. Not that he felt any qualms about the condemned men—he was curious about the tsar who seemed to his people to be “a kind of divinity seldom appearing to their eyes.” By the code of the young Austrian, imbued with the splendor of his own majesty’s embassy, such a mighty sovereign as the young Russian could do no wrong in punishing rebels, however severely. As for Peter’s wife, Korb understood that “he felt for her an old loathing,” which would be sufficient reason for setting her aside.

Nor did the zealous courtier neglect to note down the vintage of wines served at the tsar’s table during the banquets which were held while the torturing went on. One night, the wines were Tokay, red Buda, “Rhenish,” and dry Spanish—rather in the Hungarian manner, but quite acceptable to a diplomat from Vienna. Another night twenty-five salvos of guns were fired. Korb noted as a curiosity that a serving-woman gave birth to a child during her questioning. He remarked that during one banquet they heard the outcry of a man whose flesh, torn loose by the knout, was being roasted by fire.

The salutes came as the toasts were drunk.

The varied manner in which the prisoners were finally killed after the torment aroused the Austrian’s interest. Some days there would be only a few score, on other days as many as two hundred and thirty would be brought out, either into the Red Place, at the dais of assembly where Ivan the Terrible had confessed his own crimes to the crowds, or up the river at the quiet Transfiguration village, if the tsar happened to be there.

On the first day the scoundrelly condemned appeared “with logs tied to their legs hindering the use of their feet. They

tried of their own accord to ascend the ladders, making the sign of the cross. They themselves covered their faces with a square of linen. Many, tying the noose beneath their heads, jumped from the gallows, to hasten their death."

Since the bodies were left hanging, there remained no vacant gallows by the fourth day, when beams were run out from the walls near the Kremlin gates, and men were hanged two to a beam. On another day there were priests broken on the wheel, the ropes being handled by court jesters and dwarfs. "The Tsar's Majesty looked on from his carriage."

Critically, Korb gave it as his opinion that the utmost agony was reached on the Kremlin torture ground, when men whose limbs had been broken already were lashed tight to the torture wheels to have their bodies wrenched to death.

But the most amazing deaths happened at Transfiguration, the time that the tsar compelled his highest-born attendants to act as executioners of the Streltsi. Some three hundred victims were divided among the boyars, and the great courtiers and secretaries, who had to try their unskillful hands on the big bodies. "Some struck the blow unsteadily and with trembling hands . . . to every boyar a Strelitz was led up, whom he was to behead . . . the Tsar in his saddle looked on."

Lefort refused to take part in the killing, and the higher foreign officers excused themselves. Boris Galitzin, to Peter's amusement, could not manage to use his sword. (Peter was giving the townspeople and nobility both a taste of the slow eradication of the lives of the remnant of the Streltsi. It went on for five months, and many of the bodies were left hanging or lying on the ground for all the five months.)

At one time fifty men died at once, holding lighted candles in each hand, their heads bent down to a long log. It started the fifth of September, and ended in January. Wives and families of the condemned clustered about the Red Place and the gates, not knowing who or how many would appear, to be killed that day. On a day in January, Korb wrote, "The unfortunates kept a kind of order; they followed one another in turn without sadness in their faces. A wife and child followed one up to the very beam, wailing. As he was about to lie down, he gave his gloves and linen to them—all he had left."

Those who did not die had their nostrils torn out and their ears sliced, and were sent away into Siberia.

As to Sophia, Korb explains that two hundred and thirty of them hung on thirty gibbets outside her monastery, while three of their leaders were hung within reach of her window. (She had been moved to a narrow cell and shorn of her hair. After that she lived for four years.)

This execution was more than a typical tormenting of that age, and more than the brutal retaliation of Slav upon Slav. It revealed cunning, and an activating hatred. Did the man who ordered it seek to instil the utmost of fear into the spectators in Moscow; did he mean to eradicate all of the old army that had opposed him, to prepare the way for a new move he intended to make?

There were signs of hysteria in Peter during those five months. At one wine banquet he flashed into one of his sudden spells of rage, at some argument over army funds. Drawing his sword, he slashed at General Shein and the others near him. Lefort could not quiet him. It took Menshikov, the latest favorite, to do that. After a while Peter returned to watch the dancing, apparently in the best of humors—if Korb is to be believed.

The other incident occurred when the patriarch Adrian tried to interfere, coming out with his attendant priests in procession to Transfiguration. They carried with them one of the miracle-working images of the Moscow cathedral, and requested Peter to cease the torments.

At that he screamed at them, "Take that away! Why have you brought it here? Take it out of my sight!"

Following these outbreaks, Menshikov and Lefort were careful to post an armed guard at the door of the room where Peter slept, to prevent injury to anyone who might intrude on him.

The liquidation of the Streltsi extended to the suburb where they had lived. Their wives and children were ordered to leave; in Moscow neither "work nor food" could be given to the families of the condemned.

At Kazan and Astrakhan garrisons of the old army were dis-



missed from service, or split up into details to be sent east into the Siberian service.

Word of the cadavers hanging around the Kremlin walls spread outward into the land. At isolated posts Streltsi officers took off their red or green kaftans, hid their uniforms, and disappeared. Detachments left their barracks and scattered to work in the fields and shops.

Apparently Peter succeeded in eradicating them as an organization. He had gone too far. He had driven the survivors into silence and into the far places. Not long after the torture in Moscow, Johann Korb wrote in his journal, "Now you would think rebellions must be chained, one to another."

Some thousands of the Streltsi got beyond the Urals. Their trek followed that of the Ukrainians. They were the first of the citizenry of Moscow to appear along the new frontiers, in the Baraba settlements or the Altai farms. For a long time their descendants still spoke the lisping Russian of the great city.

When Atlasov, the explorer of the distant Kamchatka peninsula, reached Moscow, he brought with him such a wealth of furs—both sables and "sea otters"—that he easily interested the Sibirsky Prikaz in his plans. The bureau had been moved out of the Kremlin into an obscure street, because the Razriad was fully occupied with other matters by then.

Atlasov, the discoverer, followed the technique of Khabarov and the others. After making gifts all around, including some select sables for the tsar, he showed his maps and argued how the resources of Kamchatka could be developed by Moscow, with himself as governor of the new province.

Granted an audience with Peter, he exhibited the captive Japanese, and Peter was interested enough to question this specimen from unknown islands—to order that Denbe should be taught Russian and should in turn teach Japanese. To the cossack Atlasov he awarded the rank of "commander" with the scanty pay of ten rubles a year, and instructed him to recruit some select cossacks on his return journey, to help him occupy Kamchatka. The voevode of Yakutsk would be ordered to supply him with firearms and powder.

This was not much to go on. Atlasov, not having received one man or gun from Moscow, did recruit some fellow spirits on his long journey back. On the Tunguska River stretch they met a trader's convoy, westbound, with silk and tea from China. The cossacks took this rich convoy east without the trader, spending some of their winnings on the way. Atlasov ended up in prison at Yakutsk.

The detachment he had left in Kamchatka survived for three years. Then it tried to fight its way back to the mainland through the guardian Koriaks, and was massacred. For the next few years other adventurers sought to follow Atlasov's route into the new territory without success.

### *The Rise of Alexashka*

As the century ended, it seemed as if Peter's clique were trying to put a period to all old customs persisting in Holy Mother Moscow. In fact a new calendar was ordained, marking the years in European fashion from 1 A.D. instead of from the very beginning of the world. In the Kremlin palace the ancient shapka and regalia of the tsars were locked up. Peter celebrated the advent of pipe smoking by one of his strangest publicity parades—with old Zotov, the mock patriarch, naked and crowned as Bacchus, leading neophants bearing wreaths of fragrant burning tobacco.

Then, too, he mourned the death of Patrick Gordon, and of his own chosen companion, François Lefort. Over Lefort's coffin Peter wept heavily, and turned upon the boyars and diplomats who followed him to the funeral, shouting, "Ho! It is a great victory for you that he is dead!" The gigantic Swiss had failed at long last to survive one of his own banquets.

Their ten years of intimacy had left an impress on the mind of the young Romanov; henceforth Peter would give feasts after Lefort's manner; when tired, he would strain after the effortless buffoonery of the Swiss. In addition, Lefort had bequeathed him a successor.

Already Alexander Menshikov had become Peter's familiar—Alexashka, addressed in letters as "*Min bester Frant*." Young as his master, this adroit Lithuanian had been turned over to

Peter by Lefort, to follow him through the Azov affair, and the tour of Europe, to serve as his eyes and ears, and more and more as his counselor. For Peter, swift as he was in impulse, seldom made decisions before testing them on the minds of his intimates.

Alexashka, as Peter called him, may have started life as a pastry cook's boy. He had a hard, smooth core in him, an obsession for neatness, and no scruples whatever. He had ingenuity in getting things done—whether the task were persuading a diplomat or getting a frigate built—although he swore that he had never learned to read or write. Physically he appeared charming, dressed always with elegance, the very opposite to the gaunt shambling Peter, who wore dressing gowns, or odds and ends of uniforms.

When Peter could not sleep at night, he would call for a servant to lie down by him, and rest his head on the man's body. More often than not, Alexashka Menshikov served as the tsar's pillow.

Menshikov alone had been able to quiet Peter in the mad hysteria of the Transfiguration drinking bout. Of all women, he had fastened upon two sisters, young maids in waiting to the secluded Tsarevna Natalia; it pleased him to watch the two when they were together, both afraid of him, and of the anger of their mistress. Before long, moved by one of his vagrant impulses, Peter ordered Alexashka to marry the elder of the sisters.

With his own wife shorn of her hair and confined in a far-off convent, Peter was thrown more than ever with the mixed women of the Sloboda. Although he had sat in drawing rooms with the titled women of the west who knew no seclusion he made only a careless attempt to alter the terem confinement in Moscow.

After his return he lost no opportunity of showing that he favored the foreign immigrants. James Bruce, born in Muscovy of a Scottish father, translated textbooks for him, and answered the letters of Leibnitz, whom Peter did not know how to answer. This Russianized Scot—"Yakub," they called him—had something of Lefort's gifted heedlessness; he posed as an astronomer, while he coached Peter on the manufacture

of artillery. Because the folk in the streets held him to be a sorcerer, he kept a light burning through the night in his tower chamber. He knew how to meet guile with guile, but he could not cope with Menshikov.

Another Scot, General George Ogilvy, took Patrick Gordon's place as the organizer of the army, now bereft of the Streltsi. He agreed with Peter that the German model would be best for a new army, but he said frankly German discipline could never be enforced. "These Russians are young," he said; "you can only bring them slowly to an understanding of discipline."

But Peter wanted a new army drilled in haste, in too great haste.

At the very end of the century he had closed, as it were, the gates of the Kremlin; he had decimated the Streltsi. On the death of the aged patriarch, Adrian, he appointed no new patriarch, thus leaving the church of Moscow without a head. Withdrawing to the Transfiguration village and the Sloboda, he felt dissatisfied with them after the orderly bustling cities of the west. Now he could not even resume the building of his ships on the Volga and the Don.

An unknown Englishman, one of the new contingent from the west, has this to say in his journal of the ships designed so hurriedly for the Black Sea and now jettisoned:

"Some they tried to bring up the Volga, by connecting tributaries, to Lake Ladoga . . . but the many shallows preventing, these ships lie rotting. . . . The remainder, about fifty in number, built at the same time but never launched, on account of their great bulk and drawing too much water . . . are to be seen at Usleno, three leagues from Kazan. . . . The attempt to cut a canal betwixt the Don and the Volga, and the haven [port] of Taganrog, all of fine stone, went on at vast profusion of treasure and expense of the lives of men."

For Peter had made the most momentous decision of his life. He had planned to start the great northern war.

*The Compelling Forces*

It seemed so simple. Barred from the Black Sea, to turn to the Baltic. To abandon the colonization, shipbuilding, and canal links of the Don basin in order to launch the new fleet upon the Baltic.

The southern steppe had been troublesome, with its dry grassland, its malarial swamps, its wandering communities of Kalmuks and Tatars and its settled communities of independent Cossacks. On the other hand many ties bound the Muscovites to the northern Baltic Sea, where the forests offered limitless timber for ships, where the folk of ancient Rus had traded and fought. Did not their northern lakes, Ilmen and Peipus, drain toward the Baltic littoral? Did not the western Dvina offer a thoroughfare to the prosperous port of Riga itself? Had not Ivan the Terrible, understanding this, waged war for access to the Baltic?

Ordin Nastchokin, that single-minded statesman of the city of Pskov, had looked to this northern sea. Enduring peace with the Slavs of Poland, and access to the Baltic—that had been the one thought of Ordin Nastchokin. His master, Peter's father, had made that enduring peace with Warsaw thirty-two years before. And Moscow itself had thrived with a plenitude of food for that generation and a half. Now Moscow held sovereignty—on the books of the Razriad—over multitudes, six or seven million souls, and uncounted strangers. Yet the power inherent in such multitudes had never been shaped into an active *force*.

Then the merchants also had their opinion. A merchant accompanied every embassy to the western lands. They complained with justice that the exports of raw flax and hemp paid duty to foreigners, who fashioned such things as the flax and hemp into sails, linen cloth, and rope to be sold back to the Muscovites. All exports from Novgorod and Pskov had to be shipped in foreign vessels.

All precious metals, iron, brass, copper vessels, and silverware, had to be imported from foreign markets. Long had the great merchants of the Kitaigorod argued with the Razriad

for some means of securing an ice-free port on the Baltic, where their goods could be shipped without interference from Swedish or Dutch trade corporations.

In his journey Peter himself had inspected most of the sea-ports from Riga to London. He had actually sailed on fishing fleets and on the huge ocean-going merchantmen that had brought wealth to the small industrious folk of the Netherlands and England, who at the same time protected themselves by powerful men-of-war. His glimpse of war at sea off Spit-head had been etched into his memory. He would never forget it.

All these compelling forces had found spokesmen among Peter's advisers, so that he started upon his journey determined to press the languishing war against the Turks, and returned to Moscow excited by the thought of a war against the Swedes.

It was only an accident of geography that made the Swedes his enemy. The Baltic itself was at that moment a Swedish lake. From the Karelian Finns around Lake Ladoga, from the drowsy port of Viborg, and the stronghold of Narva at the Narova's mouth, to the coast at the base of jutting Denmark, the Swedish kings had held overlordship since the dynamic days of Gustavus Adolphus.

With those prosaic monarchs of Stockholm the Muscovites had had no quarrel for two generations, while trouble had flared up with the Turkish frontier forces along the Dnieper (where Gordon and Samoilovich had served). No one in Moscow wanted a conflict with Turks and Swedes, overlords of the Black Sea to the southwest and the Baltic to the northwest, at the same time.

Counselors in the Razriad remembered the advice of the strange Slav Krijanich, who had argued against any move to the east: "Enemies of the Russian people would have our country go against China while the Germans and Tatars gain possession of the Russian state. . . . No, we should avoid war with two enemies at the same time, or with many enemies in many lands."

To the mass of Russians, the Swedes were kin to the Germans because they spoke much the same language. So the Turks seemed somehow related to the Tatars. All were old

rivals, settled down on the edges of the surrounding seas, hemming in the Muscovites. But the mass of the people felt no antagonism against either "Germans" or "Turks."

The most compelling necessity for the group around Peter was to establish some *center* for its control. This group had virtually abandoned the Kremlin. It could not count on the loyalty of Moscow. (The Streltsi had been rooted out not so much because four regiments endangered Moscow as because the rebellion might spread to other parts of the dominion.) And certainly no segment of the Russian people accepted the Sloboda as its governing head. On the other hand Peter's clique as leaders of a national army would have unquestioned authority, while with the enlarged army it could enforce that authority. Probably no one except Peter himself and some of the great merchants believed in the possibility of a fleet that could find its way to a sea.

Peter did not have able statesmen to influence him. Golovin, tired by mounting responsibility, was far from brilliant; the brilliant Menshikov was an opportunist. Peter had a way of throwing himself into action without foreseeing the consequences.

With Lefort's aid, he had already gained allies for the new venture—the Danes, with their shipping, the army of Saxony (after his talk with Augustus, when he lingered at Kracow). It had seemed simple, in the planning, for the Danes to take over the Swedish ports at their end of the Baltic while the Poles of Saxony captured Riga and the Russian army cleared the Swedish garrisons from the other end of the Baltic.

The Swedes were not prepared for such a threefold attack. Moreover a seventeen-year-old boy, Charles, had just become king of the old-fashioned Swedish state.

No one knew very much about this youthful Charles except that he hung about the army camps, said nothing, and had a wild way with him.

### *The Road to Narva*

The plan itself for the northern war actually had not been made by Peter but had been shaped by the shrewd brain of a

Livonian, Johan Patkul. Activated by a grievance against the Swedish monarchy, Patkul had shuttled back and forth along the Baltic, knitting together the threads of the secret alliance against the unsuspecting Swedes. The Muscovites were to confine their gains to the Karelian region and the Gulf of Finland; Patkul himself would become sole governor of his Livonian coast. Peter, excited and impressed by the fine manners of the westerners and by the gift of a splendid uniform from Augustus of Saxony, agreed to everything.

Stimulated by these momentous preparations, carefully concealed, he appointed the worried Golovin to be admiral-general, and bestowed on him one of the new decorations, the Cross of St. Andrew (copied from the cross of the Knights of Malta which Peter had admired on his tour).

"We must not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing," Patkul warned him, and then warned the Danes, "We must watch that the Russians do not snatch the roast from the spit under our noses."

(The Russians had in fact decided to take more than the Karelian coast, and to move instead straight to the port of Narva.)

Shipments of Swedish cannon were still arriving from the Baltic coast; Peter was discussing a new treaty of peace with Swedish envoys in Moscow. There, at a garden party, the daughter of the Swedish minister Knipercron spoke up before the tsar, demanding as a child will if it were true that he meant to hurt the Swedes.

"You must not think that," Peter assured her gravely. "Why, if your people were harmed, I would defend them."

He was waiting then for word from Constantinople of a definite truce with the Turks, before starting the march to the Baltic. ("If I hear today of the peace signed with the Turks," he assured Patkul and the envoy of Saxony, "I will move against the Swedes tomorrow.")

One thing Peter had got done by a supreme effort. One frigate had been launched from the ill-fated Taganrog yard, at the Don's mouth. Navigated by foreign officers and escorted by a sailing galley flying the flag of Skipper Peter Alexeivich, this frigate had worked its way out of the Sea of Azov and



voyaged safely to the Golden Horn of Constantinople, where it anchored under the height of the Serai, under the eyes of the sultan and his ministers. Rich gifts of Russian sables and walrus ivory from the Arctic had been bestowed upon the ministers. After the appearance of this undreamed-of Russian man-of-war, the treaty of peace was signed in Constantinople.

By this treaty, in the year 1700, the Turks agreed to retire from the long-contested frontier of the Dnieper—for thirty years.

When a hard-riding courier brought confirmation of the peace to Moscow, Peter kept his word to Patkul and gave the order for his new army to march, not, however, to Karelia but to Narva.

By then rumored reports had reached Moscow that the Swedish fleet was taking action against the Danes. This action at the far end of the Baltic would certainly draw Swedish strength away from Narva.

In the declaration of war handed to the surprised Swedish minister Knipercron, the cause of the war was written down in clear words. Two years before when the Great Embassy had visited Riga, Swedish officials had offended and slighted the majesty of the Tsar of Rus, who, it now appeared, had actually been with the Embassy!

When Captain Peter Alexeivich marched in the heavy autumn frosts toward Narva, he felt certain of success. This was to be the first year of a new century in his new calendar. The first frigate of his fleet-to-be lay anchored in Constantinople itself. His new model army thrust its giant columns through the forest along the little river Narova which flowed into the Baltic itself.

That army, to Peter's mind, appeared gigantic—his Guard regiments, the massed Muscovite cavalry, the newly drilled conscripted infantry in German type uniforms, the huge artillery train—forty thousand men in all. Somewhere behind followed a division of Cossacks—ten thousand more. All commanded, of course, by Admiral-General Golovin, and the staff of foreign officers, but with Captain Peter ready to direct its operations if anything went wrong.

Nothing much went wrong. Rather to their surprise the small town of Narva behind its earth ramparts and stone walls refused to surrender at the appearance of such a massive army. Autumn storms delayed the cannon; powder proved untrustworthy; the bombardment when at last it began did not seem to have much effect on Narva. Time passed, unnoticed. Remembering the toil at Azov, Peter waited patiently for reinforcements and more and better powder.

Then, on a gray November day, came an incredible report. Swedish ships were off the coast, the Swedish army was landing in vast strength and would be at Narva the next day—the army that Peter's advisers believed to be fighting in Denmark.

Hurriedly, Peter's commanders gathered for consultation. All of them looked to Peter to tell them what to do. And Peter shook with uncontrollable excitement, unable to think clearly.

The pavilion, the gaping, staring servants, the couriers riding up and shouting, the generals stumbling in, whispering in strange languages, adjusting their cloaks, the glimpses of his parked artillery, silent among throngs of men who no longer stood in orderly ranks—all this he saw as in a nightmare. The comfortable reality of the day before had disappeared in a rush of sound, in the ring of strange faces staring at him. . . . Peter remembered that somebody must take command . . . he could never do it . . .

Quietly Golovin drew him aside and spoke words he could understand. The tsar must leave at once.

Peter gave some hasty orders. He picked out the general, Croy by name, who had just arrived from the Polish court. General Croy would command. Yet General Croy did not know the situation of the army, or understand the Russian language.

"It is necessary," Peter said incoherently, remembering the powder that they had been waiting for, "to wait to receive the ammunition . . . but do not fail to make the assault on Narva before . . . the Swedish king can arrive at the town."

Although it was dark by then, he hurried in blind panic from Narva with his companions. At dawn he was far up the river, escaping from his army.

That day the Russian army ceased to exist. The gray sky darkened, and snow swirled down. Through the snow appeared Swedish regiments, marching in step. No one knew how many they were or where they had come from. No one knew anything for certain except that the terrible, orderly regiments came on and on, out of the storm, and in front of them men died.

Back from the trenches the ill-trained Russian infantry ran, crowded together. They ran to a river, flowing dark under the snow gusts. There was a bridge over the river. Under the weight of crowded men and horses it broke down.

In one place the Guards regiments, not knowing what else to do, made their wagons into a kind of square and fought behind it, firing volleys at shapes in the swirling snow.

Apart from the trenches, the Muscovite cavalry had seen no regiments of Swedes, but it had watched fugitives running past, shouting that the Swedes were destroying everything in their way. For a while the cavalry waited, peering into the storm. Then it ceased to be cavalry waiting in ranks and became a mob of horsemen racing toward the river behind them, plunging into the water, where many of them drowned.

Most of the foreign officers surrendered to the Swedes, to protect themselves from the rage and the panic of their men.

The next day the Swedes, tired of taking prisoners, built a new bridge across the river to let the fugitives still penned on the bank by the town get across and out of their way.

Afterward it was learned that the Swedes numbered only eight thousand. They had waded ashore from their ships without supplies and without heavy cannon; their horses had not been fed for two days. The eighteen-year-old Charles had led them straight to the Russian trenches, against five times their force. But they had been troops of long training, commanded by veterans and inspired by the boy who was to flash across Europe like a meteor.

An English observer described Charles XII of Sweden as "Tall, slovenly, rough in manner. . . . A horse is always kept saddled for him, because he may jump upon it and ride off at full gallop before anyone can follow him. . . . He comes in muddy as any postillion. . . . He sits down, without the

smallest ceremony, on any chair he finds in the dining room. He eats very quickly, never spends more than a quarter of an hour at the table, and never says one word during the meal . . . he never drinks anything but small beer . . . the mattress he sleeps on serves him for cover also, as he rolls it over him . . . beside his bed there is a very handsome gilt illuminated Bible, the only thing about him that is the least showy."

Charles, even at eighteen years, was a soldier by instinct. More than that, he had no realization of physical fatigue or fear. A battle was to him a thing to be manipulated as a surgeon manipulated an operation, with no thought other than to finish the operation to good effect.

Before now he had had no experience with warfare. As the monarch of a small state, leader of men who thought for themselves and read their Bibles, he did not conceive of a war except as an expedient to gain a certain advantage, or protection. With his force of forty to fifty thousand soldiers he could gain advantages for or protect Sweden. That was all.

Actually, Charles was more intrigued by the great game of war than by the stakes that must inevitably be won or lost.

As far as the Russians were concerned, after Narva's tumult, he expressed dissatisfaction with them. They did not stay on their ground, he complained, long enough to be killed. "There is no honor to be had in going against them."

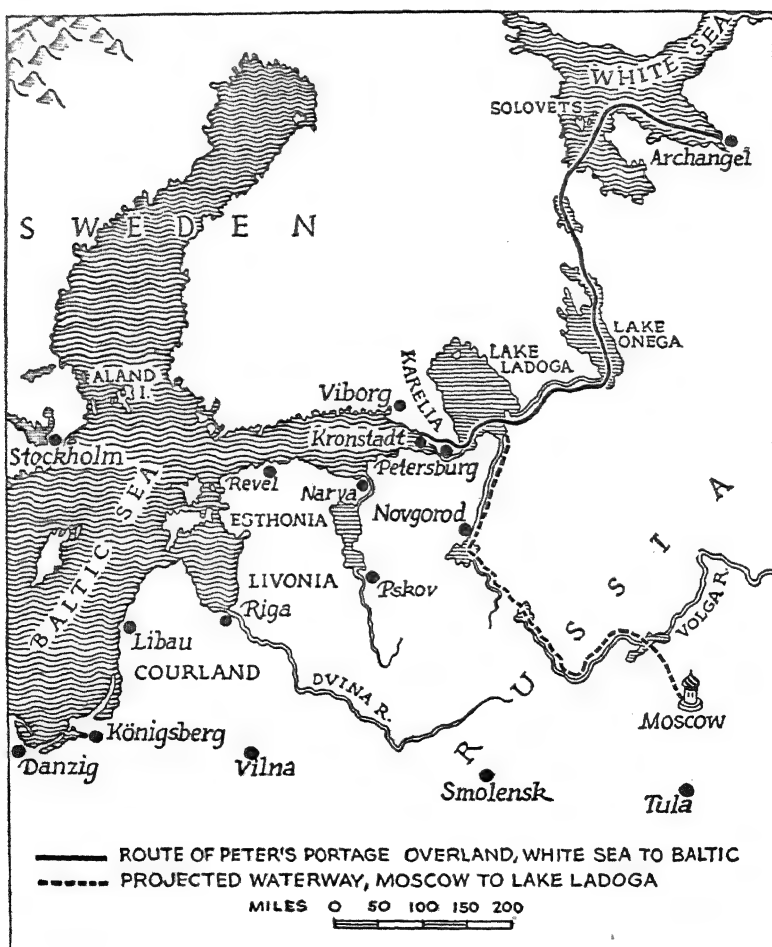
After Narva he left the Russians to the fastness of their forests and returned with his army to Poland.<sup>3</sup> In Poland there was the royal election to be decided—whether of a monarch friendly or unfriendly to Sweden—ports to be secured, armies to be intimidated, or soundly beaten or won over to him. (At the outbreak of the war Charles had descended unexpectedly upon Denmark, helped by the presence of an Anglo-Dutch fleet. After forcing the Danes to agree to a peace, he had freed Riga from Augustus' Poles in a single swift campaign, and had hurried on to Narva, against the advice of all the diplomats accompanying him.)

The Swedes held their small towns garrisoned at the Russian end of the Baltic. They believed their garrisons would be able to hold off any Russian force. On the Baltic itself they

had to fear no enemy fleet. Apparently Charles and his generals believed they had washed their hands of the Russians.

In this, however, they were mistaken. The conflict that began at Narva was to last for twenty-one years.

Peter had run away from the battle at Narva. If he had stayed with his troops, he would have accomplished nothing—as his advisers had understood, probably, better than he. Moreover, how could the Tsar of Rus risk captivity at the



hands of a pagan soldiery? The ethics that governed the duels and battles of Europe had never been known in Moscow, where the person of the tsar was held to be sacrosanct. Excuses were made, hastily.

"The tsar was called to Moscow," Polish observers reported gravely when they returned to Warsaw, "to meet an envoy of the Turkish padishah."

"He is no soldier," the Austrian observer, Hallart, related bluntly. "And his Muscovite commanders have as much courage as frogs have hair on their bellies."

It was bad enough to have this said openly in Vienna, which had treated the Great Embassy so coolly; it was worse to hear the youthful Swedish palladin praised in Europe's capitals as a greater than Vauban or Gustavus Adolphus . . . as the striker of a "Three-in-One" blow. . . . And the Muscovite ambassadors reported grimly what they had heard. Now western Europe feared the Swedes and laughed at the tsar and his army of Moscow. William III said of his former guest, "He is a barbarian, fittingly punished for trying to be more than a barbarian."

But it was worst of all to do what the Bureau of Ambassadors then did, to circulate a Muscovite version of the battle. In this version, the small force of Swedes attacking in the snowstorm had been surrounded by the Russian army, had surrendered, and had then been released, whereupon the tsar had returned to Moscow. No diplomats who knew Charles or the Swedish army could believe that. Years afterward, when Moscow's ambassadors had occasion to ask for aid or a new alliance against the king of the Swedes, they were asked gravely, "You mean the same monarch who surrendered at Narva?"

### *The Church Bells and the Army Cannon*

Humiliated during his impetuous tour of Europe, and shaken by the revolt of the Streltsi, Peter Alexeivich had been numbed by the failure of his first move into a European war. And as at Azov, he reacted swiftly. Stubbornly he set about preparing a new army.

His western type army led by the foreigners had failed

utterly. Perhaps more than that failure, he regretted the loss of his cherished field artillery. Not a gun had been got across the Narova River.

Having no stockpile of iron or brass, he ordered the bells of churches and monasteries to be confiscated for their metal, in spite of the complaint of "sacrilege." Since the old-style Muscovite cavalry had demonstrated that it was useless, he ordered ten new regiments of "dragoons" to be formed—of cavalry armed with carbines like the Swedes, trained to fight on foot. Having no way, now, to launch large vessels into the Baltic, he ordered the building of galleys, barges, and small craft on the northern rivers flowing toward Swedish Finland.

One great skill Peter possessed. He thought in terms of *things*, finished and ready for use, rather than of vague strategy. He thought as a quartermaster general rather than as a field marshal, and he seemed to realize that, once and for all, he must learn warfare from his enemies.

The man who was willing to learn in that disastrous winter of 1700 was neither Bombardier Peter nor Skipper Peter Alexievich.

He asked the only experienced soldier within reach of him what he should do. That soldier was George Ogilvy, the son of Patrick Ogilvy of Muirtoun who had agreed at Vienna to take the tsar's pay. How could they defeat, the tsar asked Ogilvy, the Swedish army marching from the frontier on Moscow?

And George Ogilvy told him, in whatever words, "You cannot defeat the Swedish army. If next spring three divisions of Swedes appear by way of Pskov, commanded by Löwenhaupt, Rehnskjöld, and Charles himself, there is no force here that you can put into the field against them."

Perhaps Peter thought of his father. Alexis would call for prayer in the churches, would appoint a new venerable patriarch and bow to him for his blessing; then Alexis would take the boyars and priests and people and rush away to safety somewhere, as the Slavs had done so often in the past, obeying an instinct stronger than reason—as Peter himself had done. He appointed George Ogilvy to be field marshal of the empire, and asked him how an army could be got together.

The Scottish soldier who hated Moscow, with its shambling crowds, told him the truth. You couldn't give muskets, pikes, and drums to a multitude like this and drill the mass for a little and expect it to stand its ground against bullets. You had to get together men who would stay in a group for some reason, and give them weapons they could use—then journey and eat and endure sickness with them, teaching them to do little things like picking off Swedish sentries or breaking down a fort or capturing a supply train.

When, after a year or more, they had become accustomed to each other and to accomplishing little things, they could undertake more. They could attack isolated Swedish garrisons.

No Swedish army moved against Moscow that spring.

All summer the new levies were trained, as Field Marshal Ogilvy advised. For Peter had to do more than defend a frontier. As he had been obliged to redeem his defeat at Azov, he had to compensate for Narva with his new model army, the one he had begun at Pressburg. His ambassadors were writing him from Europe with bluntness born of desperation, "We must have some victory to tell of, even a little one."

Under the direction of old Andreas Vinius the metal melted from the bells had been recast into three hundred cannon, but Peter understood now that only trained men could make use of these new cannon. He had taken upon himself the sole responsibility for the war. Yet he lacked the ability to command an army, like the invincible Charles. Nor would Russian regiments serve to any purpose under direct command of a foreigner like Ogilvy. Instead, Peter entrusted the first of his new field force to an unschooled boyar of old family, Sheremet'ev, who had been one of the worst offenders at Narva because he commanded the cavalry that ran away. But Sheremet'ev, who could not make out reports properly, was at home with Slavs; he had sagacity—the cautious stubborn sagacity that actuated Peter himself. Ogilvy could tell Sheremet'ev the plan of an operation, and the boyar might get something done in his own fashion.

Moreover the new commander was given dragoons and Cossacks and Kalmuk horsemen—not the almost feudal horsemen mustered in the past by Moscow—and strength enough to out-



match any one Swedish command. Peter saw to that. He had not forgotten that he captured Azov by surrounding it with an overwhelming force of ships, soldiers, and guns.

During the deep snow of the next winter Sheremet'ev sent word of a small victory at the Baltic's end. A Swedish division had been cut off and broken, with three thousand dead. There were few surviving wounded or prisoners.

"We have avenged Narva," Peter cried for all to hear. Excitedly he gave every possible reward to Sheremet'ev, who had succeeded in a little way against the invincible Swedes. A gilded marshal's baton, the decoration of St. Andrew, and the portrait of the tsar himself set in diamonds, were bestowed on the victorious officer. Bells still hanging in the tower of Ivan the Terrible sounded a tocsin.

And Peter staged a public celebration in the Red Place and the adjoining market place. Cornelius Le Bruyn reached Moscow in time to see and report it:

"There was a great firework on one side of the castle [the Kremlin]. They ran up a huge boarded building full of windows toward the castle, in which His Majesty entertained the great Lords of his court, the foreign Ministers . . . and many merchants from *beyond-sea*.

"In the evening they began to play the firework, which turned until nine. The design of this firework was different from all of the kind I had seen before . . . a figure of Time twice as big as life, with an hour glass in his right hand . . . with the inscription 'Praise be to God.' . . . the trunk of a tree upon which a beaver was gnawing, with these words, 'Perseverance will uproot it.' . . . a very calm sea, over which rose a half-sun lighted up, with this device, 'Now hope dawns again.'

"It is not possible to describe the multitude of people gathered together upon this occasion . . . when the fireworks were over I withdrew to the Sloboda where at ten at night I again heard the report of 90 great guns and many afterwards."

With his own hand Peter set off the first of this different kind of firework. And the indescribable multitude of people

saw clearly that he rejoiced in a first victory—that in time, with patience, he expected final victory.

Like the symbolic beaver of the fireworks display, the new forces of Ogilvy-Sheremet'ev-Peter gnawed at the eastern end of the Swedish dominion. They used their teeth cautiously, working their way in from fort to fort. They did not rest in winter quarters because frozen rivers and snow offered them better passage than the muddy trails of summer. And Peter would not give them time to rest.

After one success he explained realistically: "We have beaten the Swedes at odds of three to one. Soon we will beat them at odds of two to one."

The Swedish garrisons around the Gulf of Finland were secondary troops. Sheremet'ev's Cossacks and Kalmuks and partisans cut them off and killed them savagely. Almost no prisoners were sent down the river routes to Moscow, although numbers of captured banners arrived. The slow Muscovite advance destroyed towns and crops as well as men.

In another way, more indirectly, Moscow made use of its resources of men and material. It sent yearly payments to the Saxons who withstood Charles in Poland. It sent grain and horses and, after a while, divisions of men. In this the adroit hand of Alexashka Menshikov can be seen—if not the advice of the ingenious Patkul.

Slowly as the passage of time itself, Moscow was bringing the weight of its resources in raw materials to bear upon the war, without risking its embryonic field army against Charles.

Meanwhile Moscow began to use its waterways. The network of small rivers and large lakes around the Gulf of Finland served to transport forces during the summer months. Long at home on such river routes, Russian workmen got flotillas of small craft over the dividing portages. *Burlaki*—boatmen from the Volga and Dnieper—manned the luggers and galleys built on Lake Ladoga.

Salmon fishers from the Arctic, seal hunters from the Frozen Sea, Laplanders with reindeer to haul sleds, trappers of the forest, and fugitive folk who haunted the forest edge, all labored along the streams with the Muscovite carpenters

and soldiers. They slept in guarded huts, hacked at the fir timber growth, dammed shallows to float new luggers, and drowned when the unwieldy vessels careened against rocks in the spring floods. Peter drove them to labor at this makeshift inland navy—not the genial Skipper Peter of drowsy Pereiaslavl but a restless giant shambling around at a run, knocking men down with his hard fists, making hasty notes on the wad of paper stuck in the pocket of his sodden coat, heating himself with brandy, and falling asleep when he had gorged himself with food.

He had no proper ships of war on these rivers that rose ten feet in a week's flood or tore out a new channel when the ice broke up in them. Taking stores from Archangel, pushing log roads through the forest, he brought flat-bottomed vessels overland to Lake Onega and through the narrow Svir to the wide water of Ladoga Lake.

Across the lake a stone fort guarded the entrance to the river Neva. Sheremet'ev's army was called in to break this obstacle apart with cannon. In the brief good weather of the early fall the army and flotilla felt their way cautiously along the Neva, building more transports as they went. On the floods of the following spring they gained the mouth of the Neva that emptied, past an island, through encroaching shoals into the gray Gulf of Finland.

Here the inevitable fort confronted them again, a stockaded post called Nyenskants.

"The Russians, after some resistance, took and razed to the ground Nyenskans, a small town and garrison," the unknown Englishman relates. "They disposed the inhabitants into distant parts of Russia. A squadron of Swedish ships of war, arriving at the Island ignorant of the fate of Nyenskans dispatched a bark of 12 and a longboat with 4 swivel guns to enquire into the state of the garrison. About 2 miles up the river they saw the Russ army on all sides, and perceived the place was taken.

"However, fearing no danger by water, as knowing the Russ to have no vessels of force there, they stayed a while making observations in the face of the enemy's army. The tsar then present in person . . . consulting his sea officers,

ordered a detachment of chosen men and all that knew anything of the sea, well armed, to fall down the river in as many small craft as they could possibly assemble in so short a space of time, to intercept the Swedes on their return, at the bar.

"[This was] a place full of shoals without beacons, but with sandbanks on either side, more navigable by the Russ craft than by the enemy vessels. The Swedes observing this maneuver along another branch of the river, retreated toward their fleet. Night coming on with a westerly wind obliged them to drift with the current. The Russians attacked them, pouring in shot from all sides.

"The Swedes made a brave defense. They did great execution with their guns, until the bark struck on a sandbank and was taken, after the death of most of its men. The longboat of course shared the same fate. Immediately upon the surrender the tsar came aboard and finding the mate alive that commanded the boats ordered care to be taken of his wounds. . . . This was the first vessel of force the tsar ever took on the Baltic, and though a trifle in itself, he received it as a good omen."

On a sandy height above the marshes, near the island, Peter ordered a stockade to be built, and a warehouse within the stockade. Shipways were to line the river's edge.

For here his ships could feel their way out through the Neva, to the Finnish gulf, and the Baltic. A wooden church rose within the stockade. It was to be called the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul. A ditch served further to protect the stockade.

The new fort lying behind walls of turf on the island he christened, after Menshikov, Alexander's Fort. The stockaded village he called after himself, Petersburg. When he wrote it down he spelled it "Piterburgh."

### *How the Foundations of Petersburg Were Laid*

It was to be Peter's town. No doubt of that. A cottage was built for him, low and comfortable, like the cabin of a ship—except for the unavoidable fireplace. Not far from the church rose a log tavern. Later this tavern would become famous as

the Four Frigates. For the time being it served as council chamber, where the tsar with pipe and brandy at hand could "consult his sea officers."

As the matter-of-fact Englishman relates, Peter seldom acted without having some experienced person point the way. Even the wounded Swedish officer of the bark was nursed and enlisted. "Charles van Werde, an ingenious man, he persuaded to enter into his service." Other Swedish prisoners were made to labor at the foundations of the new town. Still others were sent inland, as the English officer observed, to distant settlements. Soon Swedish prisoners of war were to appear on the roads the Streltsi had followed, to Siberia.

Peter's first exploration of the site of Petersburg would have discouraged most men. Soundings taken down the channel of the Neva showed only eight feet of water—not enough to float full-size frigates. Digging along the marshy shores struck water at two feet. Still Peter insisted that large vessels could be manhandled down the channel and armed at the island of Kronslot (Kronstadt). Stones gathered into massive crates were sunk into the marshes, and piles driven, to serve as foundations for buildings. Building stone was transported laboriously by water from the Volga, and good timber from Kazan.

For in this undertaking Peter followed the advice of no one. Here was a permanent Pressburg, a greater Archangel, a port free from ice six months in the year, opening into the Baltic—the sea upon which, at whatever hazard, his fleet-to-be could sail.

Hither Peter recalled Mr. Cruys of Amsterdam, the shipyard master, then at work with Dutch shipwrights at Voronezh on the Don which led to the far southern seas. Cruys, now vice-admiral, was put in charge of the fleet to be born in the swamps of Petersburg.

Winds from the west—and from the west blew gales almost without cessation—drove the gulf waters into the Neva's mouth, flooding and destroying the works around Petersburg. There was no stopping such floods. Peter ordered the shore works rebuilt and the town dwellings reinforced.

To his hope of a haven on this gray river he clung with all his tenacity. No one else had ventured to build a city there. Cattle could not graze on the barren soil. Food had to be ferried up from the markets of Pskov or Novgorod. But it was a haven of rest, a long, long journey from the detested walls of the Kremlin. Peter called it "my paradise."

Work upon his paradise was carried on, the Englishman tells us, "by a vast number of hands." Actually it was done by human hands. Tools lacked. Dirt was carried in coats or kaftans.

Finns of the countryside, peasant soldiers and prisoners, slaved to fill up a morass. Their bodies strained against ice and wind and water. They died from typhus and from starvation, and their bodies were shoved into the swamps. No one kept count of the bodies.

When a flood came the survivors grieved more for the cattle that had been lost than for the humans, because the cattle had meant food. When men die by the thousands, death becomes meaningless.

"For all of us," the Old Believers among them said, "life is drawing to a close."

Peasants said that the new calendar foreshadowed the end of the world. When Time itself was changed, the end could not be far off.

There were portents in the sky. On frosty nights white flames raced up the northern sky. In the summer no darkness came at night—only a gray twilight.

Old men said that blind vampires walked in the rain-soaked forest, whining for the blood of the dead. The *bylini* singers hung their heads; they could not make a merry song of the mist that touched them with the cold fingers of the dead. Only in the gallery of the tavern German musicians played their horns. In the church the tsar himself sang the *Kyrie eleison* with a full throat.

"Before the Judgment Day," wandering priests said, "will come Antichrist to preach to the listeners with a melodious voice."

It was said by the campfires and in the forest that Antichrist had come among them in the shape of the tsar.

The ancient Variags, the first rulers of Rus, had held this end of the Baltic. Did Peter dream of such an ancient time? Did he think, when he stared into the wind-driven mist, of the dragon ships with red sails that had put into rivers such as this?

Did he wonder if the Swedes who faced him now were not the reincarnation of those same Variags?

Peter talked only of roads to be opened, iron to be found, stones to be cut for the new council house to be called the Admiralty. Down along the Livonian shore Sheremet'ev's Cossacks and Kalmuks gutted the villages. "By Your Majesty's good fortune," Sheremet'ev wrote, "we have destroyed the land utterly, except for the port of Revel."

Narva itself was besieged again. This time the task was given to George Ogilvy. When the fortress was stormed, his officers lost control of the troops, who tore into the houses killing and looting. Peter arrived there two hours after the capture and tried to stop the bloodshed, without success.

With Narva in his hands—a town built of stone with a serviceable harbor fronting the sea—Peter allowed no cessation of the labor upon Petersburg. Narva communicated easily by the Narova River with Lake Peipus and the frontier terminal of Pskov. Petersburg communicated only roundabout with Novgorod and the south. Yet the tsar would not give up his project of the new city.

He bestowed on Alexashka the title of governor of Petersburg. The first foreign merchant vessel to find its way in, past Swedish guard ships and through the shoals, was greeted by the favorite himself, who gave the captain a purse of gold coins and a handful of silver to each man of the crew.

And the next year, to the surprise of the Europeans, a peace feeler came from Moscow. The war could be ended and peace made with Charles, it seemed, at the small price of Petersburg and the region around it.

Charles refused.

In this offer Peter's mind can be read clearly. All in all his new army had justified itself, or at least redeemed itself. At that moment he was willing to stop hostilities to be able to

proceed with the building of Petersburg. At that time—in 1705—he took no account of the schemes of Patkul but followed an instinct of caution, hearing that Charles was preparing to move against Moscow. Perhaps then he showed himself wisest.

For Petersburg must have meant to him not merely access to the sea but the building of a city for the future in Rus. This was to be his milieu, the ground on which he would stand, forever apart from the archaic Kremlin. It was to be in fact the ground of a greater conflict than the military duel with Charles—the conflict between Peter and the majority of his own people.

For no nation until then had tried to thrust its capital city out into foreign territory.

When Peter did visit Moscow—and by then he was in almost constant motion between Petersburg, Livonia, Poland, and Moscow—he staged one of the strangest of all his spectacles. For three days and nights sessions were held in the Sloboda, concerning which ordinary folk in Moscow heard only the gossip of the imperial footmen.

Yet the gossip gave details that made Christian folk cross themselves hurriedly and spit three times. It seemed that Peter Alexeivich was no longer content with his renegade patriarch, the aged Zotov.

Peter had made Zotov head of an All-Drunken Council. Now he had promoted Zotov to be prince-pope of a Solemn Conclave. To a hidden sanctum Zotov was escorted by King Romodanovsky, and the Whispering Favorite—that was Menshikov—with Zotov himself astride a wine butt hauled by four oxen.

Within the sanctum all the solemn counselors seated themselves on wine kegs, while four stutterers gave orations. Each time the venerable prince-pope said, "Reverends, open mouths and swallow, and you shall hear and utter fine things," the listeners drank a goblet of brandy.

And what solemn discussion came before this conclave, as the tsar called it? Why, they were gathered to elect a new prince-pope. But instead of doing so they argued about which brand of wine was best!



Always the tsar listened, sometimes making notes on the paper he carried with him. Perhaps he—who had eyes and tongues to serve him throughout the lands of Rus—was noting down indiscreet talk by his favorites, after he made them drunk. Perhaps he himself—and it was only possible to whisper this—was mocking the Holy Church, for which he had named no true patriarch as head.

While many tales about the mock conclave circulated in Moscow, there was more certainty about the mockery of a tsarina. For back from the Livonian campaign had come with the troops a girl named sometimes Marta, and more vaguely the Skavronskaya. This girl had been the servant of a Lutheran pastor who, finding that soldiers visited her of nights, had married her off to a Swedish life-guardsmen . . . this girl enlivened the nights of a lowly Muscovite officer before she caught the eye of the general. From Sheremet'ev's quarters she passed quickly enough to the Whispering Favorite himself, and he shared her with the tsar, after the old habit they had of sharing such things.

Some spokesmen held that Marta or Skavronskaya was no more than a dumpy, quiet peasant lass with an eye for pennies. Others swore that the eighteen-year-old girl delighted men—a true daughter of the regiments. Certainly she had fine quarters in Menshikov's palace, and she had borne Peter a son.

Marta herself made no appearance in public. She nursed her son quietly enough in the Sloboda palace, cherished by the great favorite and his imperial master.

Some people doubted whether Peter meant to mock the ancient tsaritsas by the presence of this peasant girl. He seemed to dote on his new infant son.

### *Poltava*

Time, that had favored Moscow at the start of the struggle with the Swedes, now worked against the eastern power. Ships, roads, depots, stock piles of munitions were building, and armies growing—thrusting down from the Livonian coast toward Riga, penetrating Poland. This enormous accumula-

tion of men and material appeared to break down, rather than to achieve victory and end the war.

In Poland the force of Charles's personality and the quality of the smaller Swedish armies prevailed. On the battleground itself Charles is the man with a single purpose, Peter the absent and vacillating leader. For a moment it seems as if part of the Swedes under Rehnskjöld must be annihilated by Russians and Saxons closing in on them. Then the Russians are lying dead, all but a few fugitives, and the Saxons are broken.

Peter, unable to understand what is happening, orders Ogilvy to withdraw all forces from Poland. The Scot refuses to retreat, and Menshikov is given supreme command. Then Menshikov is almost cut off at a river, with Swedish armies closing in on him.

"Abandon the guns," Peter commands. Leaving their artillery, the Russians get across the river and escape through the Pripet Marshes, back to their own frontier.

Poland, devastated and divided, elects a monarch sponsored by the Swedes. The ingenious Patkul, whose land of Livonia is now a waste, is caught and imprisoned. Even Moscow's allies in fragmented Poland agree to terms of peace, secretly, with Charles.

Betweenwhiles, Peter hurries up to his paradise on the Neva.

Again Moscow's emissaries try to influence the great courts of Europe to intervene. Versailles is cold, and Constantinople mocking.

Andrei Matviev, the son of Little Sergy, is sent to Amsterdam, where he finds the Dutch, like the English, hostile to Moscow's new military power. Matviev is instructed to offer at need a bribe even to Marlborough to espouse Moscow's cause. "As much as one thousand English pounds." Peter adds his word: "If he wishes a principality, let him have Kiev or Vladimir—or Siberia."

But the peace must secure Petersburg to Moscow. Peter is willing to give up either of the two ancient capitals of Rus, or the little-known territory beyond the Urals. Petersburg he will not give up.

Neither Marlborough nor Charles will listen to rewards or

negotiation. Charles accuses Peter of staying away from the war on his river, and adds, "I will agree on a peace with the tsar in Moscow."

Now Charles turns toward Moscow. He has Poland quiet around him. Even the Prussian barons have made their peace with him. On New Year's Day of 1708 his field army crosses the Vistula on the ice, moving eastward.

Across the Polish and Lithuanian rivers his Swedes advance. Before him the Russian commands retreat. One of their armies is caught and badly lacerated.

Peter, hurrying down from his new city, shaking with malarial fever, is with his troops. They hold a council of "faithful men of our own people, not of foreign fools."

They have lost the war in Poland. Diplomacy has failed them. Wealth and supplies poured into the west no longer serve to give Charles pause. Although he has got rid of Ogilvy, Peter has not forgotten the Scot's warning, "You can not defeat the Swedish army."

A new danger confronts him—rebellion spreading in the south, as will presently appear.

But in six years Peter and his Russians have learned much from the enemy about war. They now command veteran troops in massive divisions that can be relied upon to stand their ground. And above all Peter has learned that he has nothing at his command to match the inexorable skill of Charles, Löwenhaupt, and Rehnskjöld in a decisive battle. He does not make the mistake now of trusting his own skill or the greater numbers of his Russians. He has three times as many men. But he will not rely upon that.

At the council in midsummer 1708 the Russians decide to retreat further, burning villages and destroying crops behind them, to leave the Swedes a barren country to enter. In Moscow the people start to fortify the suburbs.

Yet Charles will not follow them. His commands push forward a little, reach the devastated area, and pause. It is now Charles's turn to make the decision, whether to drive at Moscow straight through Smolensk, or to hold what lies behind him, around the Baltic. His generals insist that the Swedes

should advance no farther. Löwenhaupt is bringing up from the Baltic strong reserves of men and the heavy supply train. They want to wait for the reinforcement.

The one thing Charles cannot bring himself to do is to retreat. He does not take Moscow into account. His purpose is to find and break the Russian army—to win the man-to-man duel with Peter—and then to make peace on his terms.

He does not follow into the devastated area. Instead he turns south down the Dnieper. If he has a plan, more than the instinct of a fighter, he will not explain it to his officers. Perhaps he believes that the main Russian army must follow him, perhaps he intends to shift from the desolate north to the fertile Ukraine, where his troops can be supplied; perhaps he hopes for support in the area of the rebellion against Moscow, of which he has been informed by now.

So without waiting for Löwenhaupt he starts south from Moghilev, through the rain-soaked forests toward the open steppe. The distances dwarf the narrow spaces of the Baltic. The only inhabited places are villages, not comfortable towns.

The cold of that winter is terrifying, killing off the transport and artillery horses. Cannon have to be abandoned along the line of march. Surgeons work constantly, amputating frozen feet. At times it seems as if wood will not burn under the blight of the subzero frost. Charles will not put his men into winter quarters, and they follow him because they have always followed him and because he has always proved to be invincible. . . . "Sometimes we have to do extraordinary things to win," he tells his men. They think he may be insane because he has read to him old Norse sagas, wherein eastern sorcerers were vanquished by Norse heroes.

Löwenhaupt is cut off by the Russians and fights his way through to Charles with little more than a brigade surviving, after burning the vital supply train.

The Russians are following somewhere to the east, but Charles feels for their main strength in vain. He leads small columns out, accomplishing miracles in small engagements. He turns sharply east into the Ukraine after the spring thaw, moving between Kiev and Voronezh, where are Russian warehouses and shipyards.

At the town of Poltava, almost on the border of Russia proper, he lingers to capture the walled town. Again his officers advise against his judgment. They want to retreat during the summer months. Charles will not retreat.

This time he does draw the main Russian strength. The armies appear along the river on the other side of the town. It is almost the scene of Narva again, but with the Swedes in the siege lines and the Russians approaching to relieve the town. They move with extreme caution.

When they cross the river, they entrench themselves in a square resting upon the river. This square cannot be taken in flank. When they move, they advance the trenches also. They have more than twice the numbers of the wearied Swedes, four times the force in artillery. The powder of the Swedes has suffered from the weather—the explosion of the guns sounds like handclapping. The Russian guns fire more rapidly—they were designed by a French engineer.

On the last day Charles is wounded in the foot and has to be carried around in a litter. He gives the command to Rehn-skjöld. Learning of this, the Russians advance their lines closer to Poltava.

The Swedish army cannot retreat now. It attacks with a desperation that carries it into the Russian lines.

On this day Peter moves about calmly under fire. He has left the command to his generals. They have little to do. The new artillery blasts the heart out of the Swedish attack by decimating the Guards division. The Russian reserves close in from the sides, almost surrounding the surviving regiments.

In a few hours the Swedish infantry ceases to exist except as prisoners or dead. Two days later the survivors of the Swedish cavalry are caught pinned against the Dnieper which they could not cross. About fifteen hundred horsemen get across, taking Charles with them to safety in Turkish territory.

The remainder of the cavalry surrenders. There is nothing left of the Swedish army except the fugitives in Turkey.

At Poltava Sweden lost more than a battle. It lost its hegemony over the Baltic, held since the generation of Gustavus Adolphus. Swedish resources had been strained to put that last

army into the field, and there was nothing left of it. Swedish ships remained in the Baltic and Swedish garrisons held the ports like Riga. Yet in its exhaustion the Swedish state had become like Poland, holding to a dominion without strength to sustain it.

At the same time Muscovite military power had increased to the point where it might control the eastern Baltic and enter Europe itself. How far that power would penetrate and what form it would take remained to be seen.

After Poltava Peter showed himself magnanimous to the Swedish commanders. He entertained them at dinner—Rehnskjöld, the Prince of Würtemberg, Hamilton, and the others—with simple courtesy. When a Swedish officer spoke slightly of Charles, Peter reproved him. "Is he not your king? I might well have been defeated as he is now."

He offered the weary Swedes a toast: "To my masters in the art of war."

These same distinguished Swedish officers were dumfounded when they were taken as guests into a hastily built wooden palace at Moscow. It was hung with banners and manned by a strange guard of honor consisting of jesters bearing silvered halberds, resembling much the ornate axes uplifted during an audience by the magnificent Varangian Guards of earlier tsars of Muscovy. Yet upon the dais in the hall of audience here sat an unknown old man, white-bearded and fierce, who was called king and also Romodanovsky.

Before this same Romodanovsky the three great Russian commanders bowed in turn—first Sheremet'ev, who said as if making a report, "By God's grace and the good fortune of Your Tsarian Majesty, I have been able to vanquish the Swedish army."

Then the elegant Menshikov, bowing: "By God's grace, and the good fortune of Your Tsarian Majesty, I have been able to take General Löwenhaupt and his army captive at Perevolotka."<sup>4</sup>

Third came the true tsar, reporting as Colonel Peter Alexievich, commander of a regiment. "By God's grace and the good fortune of Your Tsarian Majesty, my regiment and I fought and prevailed at Poltava."

After that the bewildered Swedes were requested to march past the old man, who stared at them like a Tatar with malicious exultation. At the banquet that followed, the mock tsar presided and summoned the mock colonel to his table as a mark of distinction.

But Peter did not remain a colonel for long after Poltava.

Menshikov he raised to the rank of field marshal. On his own account he accepted promotion to the grade of lieutenant general and vice admiral. To the Russian admiral at Petersburg he sent an exultant message, "Now with God's help are the foundations of Petersburg laid for all time."

Those foundations had been weak as water. Peter had propped them up by every expedient. The Englishman's log-book tells of famous shipwrights imported from the Thames: "About this time Richard Browne arrived from England, who served Mr. Harding that built the *Royal Sovereign* and has since . . . built the Tsar several ships from 16 to 90 guns that may vie with the best in Europe for the part that concerns the builder. . . . When the fortifications at Kronslot [Kronstadt] were brought to a finished state, the Rus frigates and barks used yearly to descend the river and lie in a half moon under cover of the artillery. The Swedish fleet would come and bombard them, but never made a bold attack. . . . Had they once pushed in, the batteries could have done little damage, and the few ships might easily have been destroyed—the Russians expecting no less."

And again: "The Tsar proceeded to augment the navy with sundry galleys. About 1708 he set up two ships of 52 guns each on the Ladoga Lake under the care of Mr. Brent."

To make the Neva navigable for larger vessels, Peter removed bodily all the multitude then at work digging through the hills between the Volga and Don, and started them on a new canal out of Lake Ladoga.

In far-off Astrakhan a governor named Apraksin had endeared himself to Peter by building some vessels on the Caspian that could actually weather storms. Forthwith Peter appointed Apraksin, a jovial soul with a knack of getting things

done—and so congenial to Peter—an admiral and transferred him to the new city.

Before Poltava, this same Admiral Apraksin wrote Peter that the Swedes had tried to capture his city and had failed. They had attempted an amphibious landing near Kronstadt and had been driven off by the Russians.

Nothing could have delighted Peter more. In all sincerity, after Poltava, he answered that he felt his city to be secure.

As always with Peter, his conviction whipped up immediate activity. "He was to struggle . . . in carrying on such stupendous work in a new-settled country," the English seaman's log relates, "all marshes and wilderness, producing nothing for the subsistence of the multitude of men in continual employment. All supplies for that purpose [were] brought from old Russia."

Forty thousand men were laboring there by then. Since horses died off, Peter directed that, as in Venice, residents were to make their way around in small boats. Since building stone still lacked, every vessel entering the new river port was to carry ballast of stone. Every boyar, master of more than five hundred serfs, was required to build one stone house in Petersburg.

More than that. It was told in the Red Place at Moscow that the boyars and merchants themselves would be ordered to the new city. The tsar himself had carved an ivory screen for the church in his city, and had hung the captured Swedish banners from its walls. Families as well as food were being uprooted from "old Russia."

Very clearly the folk of Moscow understood that the tsar meant his new city to reign over Rus, and to abandon Holy Mother Moscow entirely.

### *Revolt of the Southern Frontier*

It broke out first among the Bashkirs of the southeast, and then spread like a conflagration in the dry steppe to distant Astrakhan on the Caspian. Along the old Volga frontier the embers of Stenka Rázin's revolt—of thirty-five years before—quicken in the conflagration.



Then, in 1707, the Host of the Don rose against the authority of Moscow. There a Cossack, Bulavin, took the leadership of the revolt as Stenka Razin had done.

For two years it seemed as if the outbreak in the south might cripple Moscow, at the crisis of the war with the Swedes.

The authority of Moscow had never been firmly established over the central Urals, the lower Volga, or the Don. As in Siberia, fortified government posts studded the territories. These posts tried to carry on trade and collect customs tolls. The folk of the land, Bashkirs, Mordvas, Tatars of the Volga, Cossacks of the Don, acknowledged the overlordship of the Great Master in Moscow, and for the most part followed their own way of life otherwise. Peter's brief journeys to Azov, down the Don, had hardly brought him into contact with them; his project of the Don-Volga canal had been abandoned, and his development of the ports on the Don had languished.

But after the start of the Swedish war, Moscow had sought desperately to get metals by developing the iron and copper mines in the Urals—even exploring pits in the steppe where the Genoese had once operated smelting furnaces. Gangs of “mine serfs” had been transported to the new workings.

The penetration of their grazing lands by Muscovite wagon trains and labor gangs reacted on the Bashkirs. That patriarchal, seminomad folk, Finnish-Mongol by race, existed by netting the streams and grazing cattle in their open rolling hills.

Unlike the dark secretive Mordvas, the horse-riding Bashkirs did not cultivate the rich earth. Colonists from Moscow had been their latent enemy. They were still bound to the mullahs of Islam, if not to the mosques. But old instinct moved them at times to sacrifice white horses to forgotten gods; with the coming of grass in the spring they got drunk, not on wine but on the foaming mare's milk, fermented in leather sacks. Stirred by their mullahs to resist the new exploitation of their land, their small armies of horsemen struck against the Muscovite posts. They kept the field for nearly five years, interfering with all transport to and from the Urals.

Nearer than the Bashkirs, around Kazan the Mordva and Tatar villages were roused by governmental timber cutting and grain confiscation. When a young and callous agent from Moscow without other visible authority tried to commandeer Tatar horse herds, the tribal leaders protested bitterly. "If the Great Master desires aid from us in his war," they stated, "let him call for the legal quota of riders armed for war, and they shall be sent in obedience to his command. We will not surrender our horses."

The herds were essential to their tribal economy. Yet an attempt was made to take them, and Tatar horsemen were soon embroiled with Muscovite troops.

Down the mighty Volga the folk took to arms for a quite different reason. This great waterway of trade and brigandage had developed a pulsing life of its own, shared by fisherfolk and Kalmuks who trundled their Buddhist shrines in carts along the banks. Like the Mississippi in America a century later, the Volga had its floating population, dwelling on rafts and barges, as restless as the river itself. It had its own songs. This population fought back at the press gangs that sought out "masterless men" to cart them off to the training camps or canal digging. "Out with you," the Volga folk cried at tax-gatherers and recruiters. "This is our land, and we don't want you on it."

Once the rising started, outlaws flocked in to the river bends, raiding the shipping. Peasants burned the houses of their landlords. Townsfolk rioted against the soldiery now clad in *German* uniforms.

They all lacked discipline and adequate firearms. Moreover, lacking leadership, the Volga population was not able to unite with the Bashkirs and Tatars. Each revolt clung to its own area.

Down at the Volga's mouths, the population of Astrakhan rose against the Muscovite tax collectors and its own governor—Apraksin being by then in Petersburg. Remnants of the Streltsi joined the rising. The people refused to accept the new "German customs" such as shearing off their beards and dressing their bodies in vests and breeches. (The governor had protested to Moscow that he could not force the men of As-

trakhan to pay a fine of ten kopeks when they appeared in the streets with their beards unshaved; and as for putting on European clothes, they had none. But Moscow could not revoke the law. The governor was one of the first to be killed by the mob.)

To the men of Astrakhan these new ways smacked of heresy. They had never seen the tsar. In their confused minds the tsar was, like the Church, the visible administrator of the power of God. "Evil comes not from the tsar," they complained, "but from his favorites."

The Volga uprising crippled transport along the river to Moscow. And Moscow was caught in a dilemma. At that time its armies were evacuating Poland. The Razriad, fearing invasion by the Swedes, dared not detach a strong military force to put down the internal rebellion. On the other hand, the frontier garrisons could no longer check the revolt.

Moscow found an ingenious solution for the Volga trouble. Its field marshal, Sheremet'ev, the hero of the northern war, was sent out to the area of rebellion with only two regiments but with plenty of banners and drums. As the spokesman of the tsar, he quieted the Volga by his personal influence rather than by force. At Astrakhan Sheremet'ev executed only the ringleaders, taking about two hundred hostages back with him to Moscow in time to prepare for the final campaign against Charles.

In December 1707 Cornelius Le Bruyn, returning to Moscow after a long absence in Persia, saw something of the end of the Volga uprising. "On the first of December thirty persons were beheaded for being concerned in the massacre at Astrakhan. This execution, which was performed about noon, lasted but little more than half an hour, and was accomplished without any disorder, the malefactors laying their heads very quietly on the block without being bound by cords.

"Three days later Prince Menshikov gave a splendid entertainment. . . . On the sixth the tsar arrived at Moscow about noon, under a discharge of all the cannon on the ramparts, and was received with universal joy, after an absence of two years [at Petersburg and the last campaign in northern Poland]

. . . he assured me he was greatly pleased to see me again in his dominions . . . the princess, his sister, presented me with a little vermilion glass of brandy. The tsar made a sign to me to approach him, and commanded me to give a brief relation of my travels, particularly of the court of Persia and of the ladies of the seraglio. . . .

"The first day of the year 1708 was celebrated with rejoicings and a fine firework in the great square . . . his Tsarian Majesty gave an entertainment in the house of Monsieur Lefort which at present belongs to Prince Menshikov who has greatly embellished it . . . seventy more of the principal rebels of Astrakhan were beheaded; five were broken on the wheel, and forty-five were afterward hanged."

The Don Cossacks rose for a different reason.

So far Peter had not been greatly concerned with the Treasury. "It is not my task to raise money," he assured the officers of finances, "it is yours." Peter did levy some taxes on his own account, more as penalties than anything else. For example he did not want the Old Believers persecuted around Moscow; he imposed double taxation on them. So likewise his subjects of note who kept their beards had to pay a beard tax. (Once Peter amused himself by going around with some companions and measuring the beards of all they met, collecting kopeks accordingly.)

To meet the growing cost of the war, the harassed Treasury invented new taxes, on "double eagle" or stamped paper, on stoves—even on dice and chess sets. "We can't amuse ourselves without paying for it," the people complained. Other measures were not amusing. Monopolies of the state increased, to include such things as potash and rhubarb. Silver coins running short, token coins were issued, made from brass imported through Archangel; even the gold was imported from China, and found to be inferior. In the markets people took to leather tokens, to pass among themselves. The value of the new state money, measured against grain, was less than half that of the prewar coins.

With this depreciated money, the grain, beef, and fruit of the south was bought at fixed prices. Masterless men were

being impressed for the new canals and roads as well as the army.

A new drift of population began, out of the central region toward the southern steppe. To the usual steady stream of peasants escaping from state lands, and segments of Old Believers, crosscurrents of deserters and *kabalniki*—debt-ridden—added themselves.

There was no serfdom on the fertile soil of the Don. With this growing migration the Serf Bureau struggled helplessly. Demand was made on the Don Cossacks to bar out all fugitives without passports. The Cossack council would not yield up its ancient right of sanctuary. The fighting that began at the frontier spread rapidly.

"We hold to the ancient Faith," Kondraty Bulavin, the Cossack leader, declared. "We go against the owners of men and soil, and against profiteers and *Germans*."

Underlying even this outbreak was the thrust and pull of the still varied peoples of Rus. Peter, and in consequence Moscow, was forcing the population—and its supplies—north and west, into the new armies or toward Petersburg. While the popular migration had set in toward the "wild lands" in the south and east.

In Bulavin the revolt had a leader who was also a soldier, and in the Host of the Don it had a rudimentary army. Moscow tried to suppress the Don rising by the expedient that had worked on the Volga. Prince Yury Dolgoruky was sent to the area with two regiments hurriedly in the summer of 1707. Bulavin annihilated this command with its leader that fall.

By the next summer, in May 1708, the Don Cossacks had taken Cherkask, within two days' ride of Kiev, and were menacing Azov and Taganrog. By crossing to the Volga they might unite with the Bashkirs—so the Razriad in Moscow realized—and throw the whole southern steppe into rebellion. At Cherkask the Don Host was in touch with the always restless Zaporogians of the Dnieper.

And it was precisely toward the lower Dnieper that Charles was turning then with the still undefeated army of Sweden.

On July 4 the Swedes defeated the Russians holding the approach to the Dnieper. (At this time Peter and his council decided to withdraw, scorching the earth behind the armies, and to fortify Moscow.)

A division of the regular army had been hurried down into the Ukrainian steppe to hold Bulavin in check. Then, in July, good news came in from the Urals. A Russian general, who had been sent to the tent city of the powerful Kalmuk khan, down by the Caspian, had been able to enlist the horsemen of Asia. With ten thousand Kalmuks he had swept up the Volga and broken the back of the Bashkir revolt.

And in that same critical month of July the expedition of Russian regulars broke up Bulavin's two armies of irregulars, one in the upper Ukraine and one near Azov.

The danger was still great, however, in the months before Poltava.

### *Mezeppa and Charles*

Old and sagacious, Ivan Mazeppa, hetman of the Ukraine, had waited long to decide where his advantage lay. As the successor of Samoilovich (exiled to Siberia), he had been entrusted by Peter with the defense of the Ukraine against the Swedes, if they should turn that way.

But Mazeppa, while sending regular reports to the tsar, was in secret communication with Charles. Peter had trusted him stubbornly, even when advised against him. When two Cossack officers had testified before Peter that Mazeppa communicated with the Swedes, Peter had refused to believe them and had turned them over to the veteran hetman whom he had admired. Mazeppa had been entertained royally on his visits north, and had been favored by Peter—sometimes eating at the tsar's table—above any others except Menshikov and Sheremet'ev.

Ukrainian affairs being then in Menshikov's hands, the adroit Whispering Favorite and the aged hetman had gained a cordial dislike for each other—one being devoted to Moscow's authority, the other representing the weakening Cossack autonomy. Probably Mazeppa, who had conspired with

the kings of Poland and the chieftains of the Zaporogian Host, still looked upon Peter as an impetuous boy, but he feared Menshikov.

And Mazeppa seems to have been divided within himself—one side of him the builder of churches and universities in the Ukraine, attached to the memories of Kiev, the ancient city of learning and splendor—the other side scheming for his own security. Fame he had, and a craving for wealth. His class was the new and dominant class within the Ukraine, of the richer Cossacks who had amassed lands and were buying up the services of the peasantry. These were the *starshina*, military officers and great landowners as well.

Against the *starshina* the small Cossack farmers and fighters felt growing antagonism. They had a song:

*Evil is ours. Not the hetman of old  
But the accursed toil troubles us.  
We must walk when eating, sleep while sitting,  
Carrying our bread to our labor—  
When our labor is done, we have naught but our tears.*

On the Don this class of landowners had not joined in Bulavin's revolt. Mazeppa, in his effort to deceive the Russians, made some pretense of acting against the rebels on the Don. For Bulavin in attacking the landlords was attacking Mazeppa's class.

Nor did the Zaporogians join themselves to Bulavin. Monks from Kiev visited them in their war encampment on the Dnieper and besought them to remain quiet. The restless Zaporogians gathered in their war encampment hidden among the islands of the Dnieper. They had hatred for Mazeppa, who, in their minds, had sold himself to the tsar, to Moscow and serfdom. But the monks from the cave monastery of Kiev held them passive, under fear of God.

So in midsummer the steppe waited, separated by its cleavages, uncertain where to look for support. When his main forces were defeated, Kondraty Bulavin killed himself in Cherkask. His following divided, part escaping through the Kalmuk grazing lands to the Kuban River under the heights of the Caucasus, part migrating into Tatar territory.

Caught in this human vortex, Ivan Mazeppa sifted all reports from the north, conjecturing whether Charles could prevail over the retreating armies of Moscow. When the tsar sent an urgent demand for Mazeppa to join him, the old hetman reported himself gravely ill. By way of evidence he prepared to be carried to Kiev, to receive the last blessing of priests. (For Mazeppa remained at heart an Orthodox believer, and detested the innovations of the Muscovite court.)

News reached him that the Swedes were entering the steppe. That decided him. He sent an offer of alliance to Charles, agreeing to supply the Swedish army in the Ukraine. In some way the agents of Moscow heard of this. And this time Peter did not doubt the report. "After all these years," he observed, "that old Judas would betray me on his deathbed!"

Menshikov was dispatched to find the hetman. But the "dying hetman" had warning of the favorite's approach. This was in October. He rode day and night with a following of barely four thousand men, to join Charles with little more than his battle standard.

For a few days Mazeppa was able to supply the Swedes from his base at Baturin. Then Menshikov's army destroyed the town of Baturin, to the last shed and woman and child.

Ten days later the Swedish advance reached Baturin. Not a sack of powder or loaf of bread remained there. Charles passed on, to the south along the road to Poltava.

When word of Mazeppa's desertion went through the Ukraine, his name was cursed and his body dragged in effigy through the streets of Kiev. In the ancient capital, that had infused the Moscow of Alexis with its culture, the religion of older days still kept its strength, and there the folk felt that Mazeppa had turned against his Church by allying himself with pagan invaders.

The Swedes gained little aid from him.<sup>5</sup> A little more they had from the Zaporogians who joined them after Mazeppa. Before the Swedish army could reach the base of the Zaporogians, at the *siech* below the rapids of the Dnieper, it was captured by a Russian column.

After the battle of Poltava, Mazeppa escaped down the Dnieper with Charles in a small boat. The old hetman and the



first soldier of Europe reached Turkish territory safely, with no more than a chest of gold and a small following. In little more than a month Mazeppa died, first bestowing his gold on Charles, who was now cut off from all contact with Sweden.

Down the Dnieper after them drifted the saicks of the surviving Zaporogians, exiles, only able to rebuild their siech under the protection of the Krim Tatars.

With the Swedes and Cossacks out of the way it was a simple matter for a Muscovite army corps to end the resistance of the Bashkirs at the other end of the arc of the frontier.

For two summers Moscow had been in actual danger—when forts had been built hastily on the Hill of the Swallows and even the remnants of the Streltsi had been called to arms again. The danger from the revolt along the frontier had been as great as from the army of Sweden.

Victory over Charles's command did not ease the memory of the danger.

### *Penetration of the Ukraine and the Baltic*

Retaliation for the revolt came slowly but very surely. It really appeared to be no more than a slight and justifiable shift of authority into Moscow's agencies. The old rank of hetman of the Ukraine was not restored—after Mazeppa's treachery—except as a title, and later Peter abolished that. The Siech, having fought against the tsar, was not tolerated again.

Garrisons left in the Ukraine were paid for by the inhabitants. The Cossacks still kept their military institutions; but their commanders were first given estates by order of the tsar—thus joining the starshina class—and more and more frequently began to be named from officers resident in Moscow, close to the tsar.

Very often Cossacks drafted for war duty found themselves in labor battalions, around Petersburg, on the Ladoga canal, or the Volga waterway, which was to connect the headwaters of the Volga with Ladoga and so with Petersburg and the Baltic.

In later years one of their colonels made protest to the Russian authorities: "In the construction camps on the Ladoga Canal many Cossacks are sick and dying—the most common

disease being fever and swelling of the feet. . . . The officers in charge of the work give them no rest or holiday. . . . Last year only a third of them returned home. . . . Wherefore I beseech you not to allow the Cossacks under my command to perish on the canal works, and not to transfer them to other places to undertake new tasks. . . . Permit them to go to their homes in early September. and do not keep them until the fall rains."

There is a new note in this petition. The colonel does not ask the authorities in Moscow to recognize any *right* of his Cossacks to be released from service. He asks that they be permitted to return to their homes before the autumn rains bring new sickness.

In these few words can be sensed the passing of an epoch. It is passing very gradually. The old saying, "The tsar reigns in Moscow, the Cossack on the Don," is no longer heard. Of course you can see the end of the epoch in the dramatic flight down the Dnieper of Charles, the soldier of fortune who has outlived his age, and Mazeppa, last of the hetmans or autonomous chieftains, and of the Siech, the free brotherhood of warriors. All, if you will, have outlived their day. But they are being replaced by the starshina class, compelling the Cossacks more and more to work for owners, not for themselves. And the new class of military nobility is being bound more and more closely to the authority of Moscow.

Migrations, however, still continue from the forest to the steppe, away from Moscow into the fertile breast of the Ukraine, where the culture is that of the Polish nobility, the religion that of "the monks of Kiev." The roads thither are more closely guarded now, and the silent migration detours toward new "wild lands" beyond the Dnieper, beyond the Volga. Presently one of the armies of Moscow will be engaged in transporting Cossack families from the far west bank of the Dnieper to the near east bank.

This active deportation attracts the notice of an English envoy, Charles, Lord Whitworth, who is observing the situation after Poltava. Speaking of the Baltic as well as the Ukraine, he writes: "It has been the old maxim of the Muscovite

officers in all their successful wars to carry off as many of the people as they could and plant them on their own estates."

Sheremet'ev will soon be the owner of 83,000 souls (in the Muscovite serfdom area). Menshikov will have more than that.

As to Moscow itself, Whitworth estimates that it is taxing 884,000 homes directly, and taking food and material from 424,000 more. Added up, then, a population of some 6,540,000 souls west of the Urals and north of the steppe is contributing money or things to Moscow during the war.

The savage revolt of the frontier regions has been broken just as cruelly by the new military strength of Moscow. There will be no open reaction against that military strength for a long time. Resistance has, as it were, gone underground—into endemic flight from the central area, and the mystical mutterings of Old Believers and sect leaders who see "portents in the sky."

Such hidden resistance will not affect Peter, but will trouble his eldest son Alexis, born of the Tsaritsa Eudoxia, now a nun.

The year after Poltava Moscow makes use of its great military force. Its experienced armies move to the Baltic and take one after the other the important seaports of Viborg in Finnish territory, Revel, and Riga itself. Tradition relates that General Peter Alexeivich threw the first grenade into a redoubt at Riga, the "accursed city."

Exhausted Sweden can make no move to protect these ports of the eastern Baltic.

The tsar will not abandon his city for the new and superior ports. Viborg instead will be one guardian gateway to Petersburg, Revel the other. Riga will be the strongpoint of the new western frontier, instead of the base for attack against Muscovite territory as in the past. (Actually Riga is the first European city to be absorbed by Moscow—the first break, as it were, into the ancient Riga-Constantinople axis, the line of demarcation between the hinterland of Eurasia and the western peninsula called Europe.)

After Poltava, the western frontier of Moscow follows the

river Dvina in from Riga and jumps to the headwaters of the Dnieper, following the Dnieper down—yet not all the way to its mouth as we have seen. This new frontier in its mid-section is pushed only slightly west of the older frontier citadels of Smolensk and Kiev, secured at such labor by the regime of Alexis, Peter's father.

As yet Moscow has little force to exert on the Baltic where Swedish shipping still dominates. In the south it has actually lost force—despite Peter's frigate that cruised to Constantinople because the twin energetic Cossack Hosts are quiescent. And because Peter himself has transferred his shipbuilding to waters connecting with the Gulf of Finland.

In building Petersburg, to make it the capital of his empire, he is taking a most dangerous step. He is placing his city of the future not only on the new western frontier but at the edge of the sea, and so subject to attack by sea.

And precisely at that moment an incredible danger manifests itself. Charles, defeated and wounded, separated from his kingdom, does not think of surrendering anything. Charles, who is nothing but the ghost of a Bayard, is preparing to carry on the war alone. The legend of victory, it seems, still clings to him.

Measured by realities, it seems futile for Charles to struggle on—one man against a growing empire. Yet reports from Constantinople assure Peter that Charles rides along the Turkish frontier with an honor escort of five hundred janizaries, with five hundred thalers to spend in a day. He is making a plan for the padishah of the Turks to assail the Muscovites, for the Krim khan to raid the steppe, and for Charles himself to rouse the forces of reaction in Poland as he returns to muster his strength again upon the Baltic.

The plan appears visionary, impossible to carry out. But is it? Confronted by the utterly impractical, Peter, practical to his very soul, cannot make up his mind.

With victory all but in his grasp—he needs only to go on building ships, the very thing he desires most to do—Peter cannot put the ghost of Charles out of his mind.

The year after Poltava he makes his greatest mistake. Hav-

ing the massive new armies ready and waiting at his command, he takes the strongest of them and goes as General Peter Alexeivich to the "wild lands" of the southwest to lay a ghost.

### *Invasion of the Wilderness*

On a hot midsummer night Peter sat in his campaign tent and wrote a letter. It was the second summer after Poltava—"the most glorious victory," as Peter liked to call it—and he addressed his letter to the council of the boyars in Moscow. It read:

"I tell you this—by nobody's fault, except that we believed false reports, I have been surrounded with my entire army by a Turkish force seven times as strong. All routes by which we might supply ourselves are cut. If God does not send extraordinary help, I can see only defeat ahead. I may be captured by the Turks. If that happens, do not think of me as your tsar and gosudar; do not carry out commands written by my hand, if I am not with you again in my person. If I die, and you are certain of my death, then choose one of yourselves to succeed me."

The letter was given to a Cossack, Ivan by name, who had offered to take it through the enemy lines. When he had written it Peter Alexeivich sat at his traveling desk, saying a few words now and then to the German generals who wore decorations on their white uniforms. A colonel in the red and green, gleaming with silver facings, of the Transfiguration Guards stood at the entrance, on duty. . . . His eyes hung on the perspiring face of Hallart, who had been at Narva . . . eleven years before, in the gray autumn storm. . . . Peter hardly thought when he answered, knowing that he had nothing, really, to say. He thought that he alone had been at fault. . . .

His head pained as if from the atmospheric pressure of a storm. A little while before a convulsion had lasted for a day and a night, until Catherine had eased it by rubbing him until he could sleep. A *paroxysm*, the surgeon in Amsterdam had called it.

More and more he depended on the ministrations of Cath-

erine—his new name for Marta, the girl of Marienburg, the gift of Menshikov.

His big body sagging in the chair, thirsting for brandy, Peter tried to think back along the way he had come, to discover something that might be done to avert either fighting in desperation, or surrender. The clear, practical part of his brain told him that it would be useless to fight, when his army could no longer move, or expect any aid. . . .

How they had thronged around to praise him when he came back from the Baltic coast. Some Poles had lined the road beyond Minsk, to greet him. At the cathedral, where he knelt for a blessing, he had let the report be spread that he was going now against the enemies of Christendom.

Only in the damp marshes the attack had come, bringing fever, weakening him, until he wrote to good Apraksin that he did not know where this road would lead him. . . . In the past he had taken advice from Golovin, who was dead, and he had told Alexashka what he wished done and Alexashka had found a way, somehow, to do it. Now Alexashka was thousands of versts distant in Petersburg. Even Mazeppa could wriggle like a snake, crooked to a hole. . . .

This plan he made himself, to be carried out by himself—recalling Sheremet'ev from the north. He based it on reports from Constantinople. The reports drew a clear picture of janizaries becoming insubordinate, and the padishah himself a worried, sick man: a new minister—a wazir of the Turkish Empire—more favorable to the Russians than the old Kuprili who had been persuaded so easily by Charles. Peter Tolstoy, his own ambassador, wrote that the Christians of Bessarabia—some of them Slavs—awaited only the opportunity to rebel against the Turkish yoke.

Peter's plan seemed simple as the move to Poltava. To send the ten dragoon regiments ahead, to feel out the way; to follow rapidly with the twenty-eight regiments and supply train as far as the Dniester, where the Christian rebels could supply him from the new harvest—only the country proved to be barren, with hungry villages where Peter looked for fat towns. Devastated by war and a plague of locusts . . .

At the Dniester River the foreign generals all voted against

going on. Almost they could see the blue line of the Carpathians in the west, at sunset. There also lay the Danube, the mighty water barrier of Constantinople. How could Peter turn back, with his army intact, after letting it be known that he would strike a blow against the infidel Turks and dislodge the evasive King of Sweden from his sanctuary behind these rivers? . . . After two years it seemed clear that he could never win peace in the north until Charles was captured or brought to surrender. . . . It did not seem as if Charles knew the meaning of surrender.

Across the Dniester, the grass failed. Kantemir, the Moldavian hospodar, joined him with a few men, but without adequate supplies—as Mazeppa had joined Charles . . . it was impossible, yet events took shape around Peter as if he himself were following the road Charles had followed to Poltava . . . supplies failing . . . Sheremet'ev, alone with him, saying that only a thousand cattle remained to feed thirty-eight thousand men, and the small army of camp followers—Sheremet'ev was sour about the personal servants and secretaries brought along . . . the cattle were dying as grazing failed.

At the Pruth River the land twisted into a labyrinth of hills, with marshes instead of fertile valleys beneath. . . . Peter marched on foot some hours with the men of the column, and worked himself with the teamsters. There were only cart trails to follow, winding among huts . . . only Cossacks could follow a route through such country, and no Cossack commands accompanied him this time.

At the Pruth his generals heard of a depot of supplies across the river. Peter selected Ronne with a cavalry division to bring them in, and Ronne went on across the Pruth.

Ronne did not appear again. Instead pickets brought word of horsemen moving both to the north and south. They were the Turks.

All his staff agreed silently when he gave the order to retreat. What else should he have done—with the river barrier confronting him? The column wound back on its own track, between the hills and the marshes. In all the countryside not a single church spire or street of houses.

The very first day of the retreat, the dark masses of horse-

men began to follow the flanks of the column, like wolves waiting to rush in. The column, wearied and hungering, turned toward a height to dig in and rest. On the height appeared a horde of Tatars. The riders of the Krim khan had joined the Turks.<sup>6</sup>

For a while the column pushed on, beating off sweeps of the horsemen with volleys. Then Peter agreed that they should entrench themselves, around the wagons. Behind a breastwork, they could defend themselves. What else could be done, with that mass of men on foot, with dwindling supplies, and the followers, and women?

On the hillocks across from the Russian camp the Turks spread methodically, digging emplacements for cannon. . . . When an assault was driven back they brought up more cannon.

Then Peter wrote his letter for the Cossack, Ivan, to carry to Moscow, if he could.

No matter how much Peter tortured his brain, he could think of no escape for himself and his army. Perhaps they could hold off the Turks for four or five days; after that, the last food would be gone.

When the tension in his tired body grew unbearable, he left his officers and went to Catherine's tent. There he sipped a little brandy and threw himself down, waiting for her to loosen the collar of his uniform and stroke his head. She had a way of quieting him—this twenty-four-year-old peasant girl who had been Marta Skavronskaya in the Livonian camps. She had given him two daughters as well as the son who died. Even pregnant, she could travel about at headlong pace with him, drinking glass for glass with him, calm even during his worst moods.

His Katya, broad and sunburned, did not wear her clothes like the baroness, or De Lyon's wife, who had caught his eye in Poland. Her clothes hung about her as if she were dressed up for a costume ball. She did not complain when he found another woman more amusing.

Now the baroness looked like a frightened scarecrow, and



De Lyon's wife wept, because of the heat and the bad meat. Their voices turned shrill. Not so, with Katya.

Her fingers riffled through his short hair soothingly, and she said nothing.

"It is bad," he ventured, conscious both of the throbbing pain in his head and of the situation from which he could see no way out.

"Now it is bad, Petrushka," she agreed. "But after a time it will be better."

She did not say by God's will, or by the good fortune of the tsar. She did not urge him, like the baroness, to do this or that. Perhaps she had no thought how the terror of death or surrender could be averted. No, in Katya's mind it was clear only that good came with evil—that she, a servant born, traveled about like a tsaritsa, and that the army protecting them could disintegrate into simple men who were afraid . . . to protect her he had given her a fine European name, Catherine, and the semblance of a marriage, and he had left some money with Alexashka for her and the children . . . she loved jewels, and he had had a whole eagle fashioned for her, with diamonds. . . .

As she rubbed his forehead, he was conscious only of her hard cool fingers and of her breathing. There was nothing in Katya of the mockery of the great camp falling apart under his eyes into bewildered men and useless things. . . .

In the heat of the afternoon they gathered around the carriage where the wounded Hallart sat. General Baron von Osten's wife insisted on keeping her lacquered carriage, with horses harnessed, near the commanders, and they talked low-voiced. The foreign generals wanted to send out a flag of truce, to learn what terms the Turks would grant. Peter made no objection. Sheremet'ev grumbled. "Are they such fools—to take a little, when they could have everything on their own terms in a week? What would we gain by asking for a truce?"

Still, he agreed to write the note to the Turkish wazir, to be sent out under General Janus' flag.

As the foreign commanders were returning to their posts, General Janus remarked, "Whoever planned this business of the flag of truce ought to be the biggest fool on earth. But if

the Grand Wazir accepts our offer, situated as we are, I'd call him the world's biggest fool."

The trumpeter and the flag-bearer came back with no answer.

A councilor who had said little until then asked a question of the tsar and the marshal. "How much can we pay them?"

Peter Shafirov seldom raised his voice at the start of an argument. For one thing he had, as yet, few friends; for another he sifted out the minds of the talkers until he had some answer for them. As a cloth merchant from the Street of the Clothiers, he understood bartering; as a Polish Jew he was at home with many languages—from interpreter in the Ambassadors' Bureau Shafirov had risen, somehow, to the rank of vice-chancellor. Not that rank of itself meant much among Peter's entourage, where Galitzins and Dolgorukys served as brigadiers under a Menshikov or a James Bruce. While the staff had been arguing, Shafirov had been interrogating Turkish prisoners.

"Pay them?" Peter exclaimed. "Why, pay them enough."

Shafirov went out, in his long dark kaftan, with the trumpeter to the Turkish lines. He took with him another shrewd mind, Artemy Voluinsky, who was hardly known to the court as yet.

When they came back they had some odd information that seemed important to them. The commander in chief of the Turks and Tatars, Baltaji Muhammad Pasha, was new to his command and had little experience in war. A Swede and a Pole advised this newly appointed wazir, who had no real desire to serve the interest of the Swedish king. Likewise the kayid of the army and the agha at the head of the all-powerful janizaries were jealous of the foreigners.

In this information Shafirov saw more possibilities than did the Russians. He went back again to cultivate the weakness of Baltaji Muhammad Pasha with authorization from Peter to pay over a quarter million gold ducats, and to yield up all Russian conquests in the war except Petersburg and the territory around it.

*The Capitulation on the Pruth*

By the next evening Peter and Sheremet'ev were drinking gleefully. Because Shafirov had contrived an unbelievable bargain, to extricate them from an impossible situation.

The terms finally arrived at in this fashion were these:

In money, 230,000 ducats, or their equivalent in gold, to be paid to the Turkish command.

In territory, Azov to be surrendered to the Turks, and the new port of Taganrog to be abandoned by the Russians, and all fortification at the Don's mouth to be razed.

In the political field, Russian troops to be withdrawn from Poland, and the tsar to refrain from interfering in Polish affairs, or with the Cossacks west of the Dnieper.

In other respects, the Russians were not to molest the Krim Tatars, and Charles was to be allowed free passage back to Sweden.

The Russians were to give up their embassy at Constantinople, and to leave the present ambassador, Peter Tolstoy, with Shafirov himself and Sheremet'ev's son, hostage in Turkish hands for carrying out the agreement.

The Russian army on the Pruth was to be allowed to return unmolested to its own territory, and peace thereafter was to be maintained between the two countries.

This capitulation at the Pruth was signed by both sides as soon as drawn, in writing.

Catherine herself may have contributed some of her jewels to make up the first payment to the Turkish officers. At least one of her rings turned up later in Constantinople. But she hardly negotiated the truce with the wazir, as some legends have it; nor did she purchase the release of the tsar and his army with her jewelry. So fantastic was the affair at the Pruth that almost any story about it gained credence.

Charles, as might be expected, was angered to the core by the paid-for truce at the Pruth. But being Charles, he lost no time in contriving the dismissal of Baltaji Muhammad, at Constantinople, and once more trying to create an active front along the Ukraine. (He might have held command in the

Turkish army at the Pruth; he refused either because he would not serve with Moslems or because he would not share a command with another man.)

Once safe across the Dnieper with the survivors of his army of invasion, Peter's spirits rose again. "We have lost a little," he said in his exultant mood, "yet we have kept what will be of incalculable advantage in the north."

And to the north he proceeded to go in his inimitable fashion, combining play and work. Whether sight-seeing in reality, or pretending to see the sights, he traveled at the top speed of hard-driven coaches. Apparently he had closed the chapter of the Pruth. At least there is no further mention of that affair in his wartime notes, published later under the title of *The Journal of Peter the Great*. That journal gives his itinerary for the next two months and a half.

"August 3, Their Majesties [Catherine being given the title of later years] left the banks of the Dniester with the bulk of the army. After a march of a half league they reached a post-station where they spent the night. On the 4th they journeyed on and slept at the town of Rucha. Thence H.M. [His Majesty], having parted from the troops, took the road to Karlsbad to restore his health, and here are the places through which he passed.

"The 6th H.M. arrived at Kamenetz, a fortress that he had not yet seen . . . he left on the 8th, and on the 9th reached Zlochevo, which had a battalion of the Preobrazhensky [Transfiguration] regiment that he took along as escort. On the 11th he took to the road and arrived at Yaroslavl the 15th. There he stayed two days to repair the barks needed to descend the San River.

"They embarked the 18th, entering the Vistula near Sandomir on the 20th. The 24th H.M. arrived at Warsaw where he spent two days and left for Thorn, which he reached the 29th . . . [and conferred with Polish officers who reported the dispositions and strength of Swedish garrisons along the Baltic.]

" . . . The 2nd of September H.M. departed from Thorn and posted toward Karlsbad to take the waters. Her Majesty remained at Thorn with the battalion of the Guards [Peter

being unwilling to take her among the nobility at the German watering place]. . . . The Emperor went by Posnan along the frontier of Brandenburg, and arrived at Dresden on the 9th [where he bought a watch for Catherine] and left on the 11th for Freiberg, a town noted for its mines. H.M. examined them and went down to the pits. Then he went to the castle, where the miners came with their own musicians, to honor him.

"The 12th in the morning H.M. took to the road, and arrived that evening at Karlsbad.

"The 15th H.M. started taking the waters.

"On October 3d H.M. left Karlsbad and spent eight days at Dresden. Early in the morning of the 12th H.M. embarked on the Elbe and arrived at Torgau the next day. Here at the residence of the Queen of Poland (who was also Electress of Saxony) was to be held the marriage of his son, the Tsarevich Alexis with the Princess Charlotte of Wolfenbüttel [and Peter himself was to talk with the celebrated Leibnitz] . . . After the wedding the Emperor left on the 19th, and arrived the 20th at Krossen, the town in Brandenburg where was then His Royal Highness the Prince of Prussia. . . . The 24th H.M. departed and came to Thorn on the 27th where he rejoined his wife. The 28th Their Majesties took ship on the Vistula, passing by Gnev [and by Marienburg, where Shermet'ev had first noticed Catherine] . . . and arriving the 31st at Elbing where they stopped until November 7th. The commander and the garrison of this town were Russians.

"November 7th Their Majesties embarked on yachts, with a south wind . . . reaching Königsberg the evening of the 9th.

"On the 11th Their Majesties went by land to Schaken where yachts had been fitted out for them . . . the 13th they were at Memel where they debarked . . . through Courland.

"The 18th they arrived at Riga, where they were greeted by all ranks firing three salvos.

"The 30th, the day of St. Andrew, fireworks were shown at Riga, on three stages, one of which represented an eagle with the inscription *Long live the defender of Livonia.*

"Their Majesties then departed for Petersburg."

In this autumn journey of more than twenty-two hundred miles by road and sea the gangling leader of Rus had not only rested and bathed and feasted; he had signed the Turkish peace treaty—without the clause safeguarding the western Cossacks—he had started to form a new alignment of small Baltic powers, Denmark and tiny Prussia among them, and he had tried his hand at diplomacy by marrying his religious son Alexis to the girl whose sister was wife of the emperor-elect.

At that time, more markedly than before, he passed rapidly from optimism, in which the most difficult undertakings seemed possible, to melancholia. Now he hesitated to evacuate either Azov or Poland. He made no effort to conceal his own mistakes in the disastrous campaign, and when a courtier ventured to congratulate him on his good fortune, he replied with a flash of his bitter realism, "My good fortune consists of this, that instead of being beaten with a hundred blows, I had only fifty."

For a year the invisible frontier around the Ukraine, between Azov and Warsaw, became unsettled by the uncertainty of what was to come. Once the three Russian hostages, including Shafirov, were thrown into the Seven Towers at Constantinople and threatened with torture. Again, Charles the indomitable resisted arrest by a Turkish army division by defending a small castle. Eastern Poland rose against Russian military rule at the approach of a few Zaporogian Cossacks and Tatars—and the rumor that Charles himself was passing through.

Then at last Peter and his advisers wrote *finis* to the move toward the Pruth. The western Ukraine was abandoned by Russian troops that took the Cossack inhabitants with them across the Dnieper. The Ukraine ceased to exist as an entity, and its die-hard leaders journeyed away with Charles when he returned to his homeland—quiet having been restored in exhausted Poland.

Azov was returned to the Turks, the lower Don evacuated.

"The tsar being obliged to deliver up Azov and Taganrog," the unknown Englishman relates, "rendered all his naval armament on the river Don entirely useless. Some of the ships were sent to Constantinople, either sold or given to the Turks.

Many were burned by the tsar's order, and others remain . . . under sheds to preserve them from the weather. Their equipment, especially sails and cordage, has since been carried, sledgewise, to Archangel."

Only after the year of vacillation did Peter accept this deep personal humiliation. Throughout Europe, his disgrace at the Pruth had balanced the prestige of Poltava. Now he had to surrender his first conquest, Azov, and to scrap his beginning of a navy upon the Black Sea, at incalculable cost.<sup>7</sup>

Charles survived, unharmed and determined as ever, while at forty years of age Peter felt himself to be a sick man.

Thereafter he did not venture south again. Years later, when the wrecks of his ill-found shipping lined the southern rivers, he visited the lake at Pereiaslavl. Finding his cottage there moved from its site but still preserved, he ordered it filled with brush and burned as a fireworks display.

By then the only home to which he returned from his constant journeying was the two-room-and-garret cottage by the Neva, with the door brightly painted in the Dutch style. There he could sit with his pipe and glass of brandy by the young fir trees planted from seedlings he had brought from the Harz Mountains.

## IV

# RISE OF THE MAKERS OF THE REIGN

### *Alexis in Moscow*

**B**ESIDE the river Neva, near the Admiralty building, a bronze horseman rears. It is Peter Alexeivich wearing a European uniform, his arm pointing to the west. Of this statue Pushkin wrote:

—*Ah, lord of doom  
And potentate, 'twas thus, appearing  
Above the void, and in thy hold  
A curb of iron, thou sat'st of old  
O'er Russia, on her haunches rearing!*<sup>1</sup>

Of all the bronze horsemen that rear impassively in the parks of the western world, this one least resembles the man who was its model. For Peter, that practical, brutal mystic, hated ceremonial and almost never clad his ungainly person in a complete uniform. Certainly at this time, during his transit to the Baltic and the change in his own nature, he did not rule Russia with an iron curb.

Charles, Lord Whitworth, who knew him then, said that he was shy of being seen because of the convulsions that seized him. Suspicion of others plagued him. Violent in the first heat of his temper, he became irresolute afterward when he tried to deliberate. His portrait, too, has been drawn in words by Kliuchevsky. "In his own home Peter was never anything but a guest . . . forever on a journey, always in a hurry. Besides, he could not remain seated for long, even when taking part in a Court festivity.

"If not sleeping, travelling, feasting or inspecting, he was



working with his hands . . . instinctively, his fingers itched for a tool . . . every place where he lived was heaped with things he had made himself, such as boots and chairs, crockery or snuff-boxes. His mechanical prowess filled him with an immense belief in his own skill.

"Usually he rose at five, and after lunching from eleven to twelve, retired for a nap (never, even when guests were present, did he omit this) before rejoining his table-mates for dinner. . . . Even his morning receptions of State he would hold in his rough dressing gown, exchanging it for the kaftan which he hated to discard. . . . He would go for a drive with his body thrust into a two-horse gig or cabriolet shabby enough to have been scorned by a huckster. . . . To the end, he never forsook the domestic habits of the old-time Russian. Yet he desired his Consort to be surrounded by a measure of magnificence.

"Most of all he loved to mark the end of the day's work by gathering merry-hearted guests around him over a glass of Hungarian wine—walking up and down, without forgetting his glass, to listen to their conversation . . . inasmuch as he always drank his vudka neat, he would take it into his head that his guests must do the same. Upon that, pailfuls of brandy would appear, and the sentries would be given orders to let no one depart without further instructions. . . . Peter let himself go at the launching of a new ship. A ship delighted him as a toy delights a child.

"Though Peter was kindly as a man, he was cruel as a Tsar, and took too little account of human nature, in himself and in others . . . his nervous attacks usually ended in convulsive spasms. As soon as Peter's attendants perceived an attack to be coming on they sent for Catherine, who made the Tsar lie down, took his head upon her lap, and smoothed his temples until he slept."

Unsure of himself, Peter held fast to old habits. From his anxiety he escaped in two ways, by convivial heavy drinking, and by walking, driving, or plunging into a new journey. Not a year passed now that he did not leave his country, to cross the western frontier.

He could be kind by instinct. When he took one of his ambassadors, Nepluyev, who had returned from Italy, into a carpenter's cottage to have something to eat, the envoy could not stomach the cottager's vudka and carrot pie. Peter protested. "Come, man! Our host will be offended." Breaking off a fistful of pie and holding it out, he added more sharply, "Now, I bid thee eat something. Good food of our country it is—not the food of Italy."

Yet Peter could order a guest who would not drink with him to be stripped and bound and laid for two hours on the ice of the Neva. One elderly boyar died of such exposure. He could lacerate Menshikov's face with his heavy fists or make the great favorite drink until he collapsed on the floor and his wife ran in screaming from the women's quarters, to bathe his face and rub him. Some of the feasters died, at Peter's drinking bouts.

Nor could he endure a long speech by a foreign diplomat. He had a way of interrupting the man by kissing him or patting his head. Then the tsar would burst out in rapid Russian which the other did not understand, and before Peter's words could be translated, he would be striding off.

He staged his marriage to Catherine in no ordinary way. Whitworth reported that at the end of the winter, 1712, invitations were sent out to the tsar's "old wedding." It took place at seven o'clock in the morning at a small chapel belonging to Menshikov. There "the tsar was married in his quality of rear-admiral, and for that reason his sea officers had the chief employments, the Vice-Admiral Cruys and the rear-admiral of the galleys being the bridegroom's fathers [sponsor fathers]. The bridesmaids were two of the Empress Catherine's own daughters, one above five and the other three years old."

Already Catherine, that "likely lass of Marienburg," appeared publicly at Peter's side, and her great influence over him made her in actuality the tsaritsa. Yet with Eudoxia still alive in Suzdal, Catherine's marriage could be questioned.

Peter, apparently, tried to blot out the memory of Eudoxia—never speaking of her, or providing her with money. At

that time the nun who had been tsaritsa wrote her brother for some money. "I do not need much, only sufficient to have food, to eat and to offer. I drink no wine or brandy; still, I would like to be able to offer it to visitors. There is nothing here. I know I am a trouble, but what can I do? As a beggar I ask alms!"

The memory of Eudoxia was bound up with the domes of Moscow, the chanting of prayers—with everything that Peter would like to forget but could not root out of his mind.

To those memories and to that part of him belonged Eudoxia's son, Alexis, now more than twenty years old. Alexis was not allowed to see his mother, and he seldom saw his father. Peter, after attempting to make the boy a useful officer in his new army, had turned him over to German tutors, in Menshikov's care, to learn German and Latin and to go his own way. Alexis, shrinking from physical activity, fell ill in the camps, and could see no reason for the war with Sweden.

In consequence Alexis kept to his own house in Moscow. He felt a companionship in the old city, almost deserted by his father. And the city returned his affection. The remnant of the "upstairs poor" haunted his doorstep; priests of the Old Believers came secretly at night to tell him their troubles, over his books. He had a morbid fondness for visiting the tombs in the cathedral—the tombs of his dynasty in the future, Peter announced, were to be laid in Petersburg. Wandering down the Moskva, he could study the tracery of the Kremlin towers against the night sky. Where he went, bearded men followed, and boyars accosted him as beggars.

For Alexis was the tsar's first son, the heir to the throne by ancient custom. Now, the boyars said, the Whispering Favorite had taken Alexis' place at Peter's side; there, too, rode the Livonian wench, like a tsaritsa, in his mother's place.

Their innuendoes and complaints did not penetrate the shell of Alexis' absorption. Alexis sheltered himself in the dimness of the cathedral, satiating his eyes with the rigid figures of the Byzantine saints; in the pages of his books he found quiet for his mind. Boyars said to him, "See how the tsar taketh our house servants and our peasants to serve as recruits. Verily he will have no man escape his service. And if we take

old money to the Treasury to exchange for new, we are given back only six for ten. Who but the tsar keeps the others?" Such talk troubled his mind only vaguely. Better he relished the talk of the priests who knew exactly how St. Andrew had voyaged to Kiev and planted a cross there, over the river, and how a shaft of light had struck down from the heavens upon the cross.

Yet in the welcome hour when he talked low-voiced with his confessor, he was startled by a question that he could not answer. Why was no patriarch named in Holy Mother Moscow? Why did the tsar refrain from naming one to be the head of the Church and to carry out fittingly the service of God?

Perhaps it was safe for the confessor to ask that question in the silence of the cathedral where no informer could be hidden near them. But more often than not the conversations of Alexis' visitors were repeated in the corridors of the Bureau of Secret Affairs, where such a report earned six rubles. Servants knew how a coin could be had by whispering a few words to a "tongue." Wenches in the taverns knew the "tongues" of their streets. Sometimes a tavern or a street would be emptied of human beings at the terrible whisper, "The tongue—the tongue!"

Not that Peter had developed the secret information system; it had been endemic in the land. Besides, Menshikov or Shafirov—who was making plans to marry his daughters to boyars of old families—would pay well to be informed about their rivals. Perhaps Peter gave closest attention to the findings of the spy network in the army. The foreign officers, of course, had shadows that trailed them. Peter knew very well how many thousand rubles the eccentric James Bruce had made in purchasing gun carriages of fir rather than oak. But good oak lacked, and the fir had been cleverly painted, and—the cannon of James Bruce had won Poltava for him. Even Sheremet'ev had his shadow, a sergeant who reported direct to Secret Affairs.

Also, Peter had a way of dropping in on his officers and picking up the book they might be reading, or the letter they might be writing. Usually, he made a joke of that.

It was never certain what punishment he would inflict. Finding a bridge broken over a canal at Petersburg, the Giant Tsar got out of his carriage to aid in repairing it with his own hands. Afterward he beat up the most responsible person near him—who happened to be head of the police. One of his followers, Yaghuzinsky, stole continually from Peter as well as from others. Yaghuzinsky had been a boot cleaner in the Lutheran colony and seems to have added to his earnings by finding girls and boys for visitors. Yet Yaghuzinsky gave Peter more information about Menshikov than anyone else, perhaps because he had no fear of the Whispering Favorite, and Peter valued him on that account. The former boy-of-all-errands offended in a small way, but he served faithfully in great matters. Other "fledglings" served Peter in the same peculiar way, capable of any act except of betraying their master.

Others might whisper the proverb "Near the tsar, near to death." None of the favorites or fledglings at that time were put to death, although some were sentenced to it, and often led as far as the block, or the scaffold or the wheel, before being told they had been pardoned.

Written evidence was given Peter that a certain preacher had been heard to harangue against him as an agent of Satan sent among Christians. On the margin of the paper he scrawled "First before witnesses—then face to face." The preacher went on with his harangues. No, there was no certainty how Peter would act when a thing was brought before him.

In those years reports from all districts testified to the rebellious murmuring of his people. In the northern forest a strange tale went around that the tsar had appeared from the wilderness beyond Nega "whence a man can come in winter only on snowshoes and in summer he cannot come at all." In the southern government of Bielgorod priests were heard to complain, "How can there be a tsar? The land of the Ukraine lieth without rule, save that bath houses, huts, and beehives all alike pay taxes in a manner unknown to our grandfathers."

Peter brushed aside complaints against his son.

*Testimony of the Tongues*

One report from a northern village must have pleased Peter. There a peasant was overheard to say, "Ah, he is verily a tsar. All the time he was with us, he ate his bread like us, yet he did more work than any of us *muzhiki*."

All down the land, however, the folk began to doubt whether Peter was the tsar. He had himself largely to thank for that. Having descended from the *mise en scène* of earlier tsars, he showed himself among carpenters and soldiers as an ordinary human. That metamorphosis they might in time have understood; but Peter did not seem to know his own mind.

To the earlier concepts in Moscow—of the unnatural tsar who had put away his wife and surrounded himself with *Germans*, of the changeling who had come back from Stekol (Stockholm)—a new uncertainty was added. This tsar obviously was taken by strange seizures that might be a demonic possession.

Moreover, Peter's fondness for (or reliance on) stage settings worked against him in the popular fancy. Satan himself could not conjure up more displays of fire and tumult than this tsar. Undeniably evil had entered upon the Russian land.

In this growing anxiety, Peter gave his people no aid by favoring or attacking any one class. The boyars feared his caprice, yet no leader among the boyars stood up against him. Merchants saw their earnings drawn into the hands of the new "inventors of revenue" without knowing how to resist. Instinctively all classes realized that this almost mad changeling was like themselves, lusty and human and sinful. There was at that time no desire to harm Peter himself.

The Streltsi had revolted against a tsar who disowned them; the Bashkirs had risen against the agents of a city; the Volga folk and Astrakhan had fought against oppressive dominion; Bulavin and his peasants had attacked enemies of Orthodox Christianity. And so it had been with others.

Now there remained no segment of people strong enough to prevail against the military power of Moscow. The secret intelligence of the city singled out any nucleus of resistance.

Hitherto Peter, in spite of his departure from the norms of the past, had based his rule on the age-old support of the dynasty in Rus—the boyar and merchant classes. His administration was still channeled through the bureaus, little changed.<sup>2</sup> In some twenty years he had passed only two ukazi of an over-all nature, one intended to strengthen local administration, the other to divide the dominion into more specific provinces.

Now popular opinion, completely bewildered about Peter, had passed on to the question, what was to be done about him? If this tsar was no true tsar, should he not be eliminated in order to obtain a true tsar?

From that point the reasoning of the people proceeded slowly but inevitably to decide who would replace him. From their viewpoint only one legitimate tsar existed. Alexis conformed to the pattern they knew. He would be a true tsar.

There seemed to be nobody else.<sup>3</sup> Years before—almost unnoticed—the Tsarevna Sophia had died quietly as Sister Susannah. She had passed out of popular memory after the skeletons of the Streltsi had been taken down from the tree outside her window. In any case, she had been no Tsaritsa of Rus.

True, the Livonian wench had her children. But no class in Rus, unless the animallike muzhiki, would bow the head to them. Equally certain it was that Tsar Peter Alexeivich would not impregnate again his lawful wife, now Sister Elena.

On the other hand Alexis had married a noble-born girl. He could be seen taking her into the cathedral to sit with him before the holy pictures, although she was a heretic, a Lutheran, and a German.

For a moment, after his marriage, a rift of happiness came into the gray life of the weak heir.

Peter was responsible for the catastrophe that followed, although Menshikov's feline mind helped shape it.

Alexis was narrow, stubborn. When his father became exasperated with him, he withdrew into himself, and disobeyed slyly. Moreover by then Peter—and Menshikov on his own account—had glanced over too many reports on the treasonable talk of the boy's visitors. Probaby neither man took the

reports very seriously. Such murmurings were endemic in the land. Menshikov, as cicerone, forced Alexis to live at Transfiguration, with only slovenly servants about him. The Whispering Favorite also held up the boy's stupid, shy bride to ridicule, because she was pregnant. In public and even before Peter, the magnificent-appearing favorite was able to make the nervous boy seem ridiculous. Menshikov understood that the father would expect the son to stand up sturdily for himself,<sup>4</sup> while the nervous son could be tortured more by wit than by actual ill-treatment. When they were alone, he told Alexis, "Do you not see that I stand nearer the throne than you?"

Peter as usual was moved to hasty action. If his son had failed even in the simple tasks—simple, at least to Peter's mind—of forwarding supplies to the armies or fortifying Moscow when the Swedes menaced them, why then Alexis must learn to serve the state in other ways.

So Peter removed Alexis to the Baltic area, to serve as a messenger boy of sorts. In consequence Alexis gravitated at command between resorts like Karlsbad and half-built Petersburg. That city the boy hated. And precisely there, the all-competent Menshikov served as governor of both city and province. Menshikov was also by then loaded with titles and decorations—being named a sovereign Prince of Rus, a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, hereditary Prince of Baturin (Mazeppa's base, where Menshikov had managed to burn, and cut and torture to death six thousand human beings). In the army he was generalissimo, and colonel of the Transfiguration Guards (Peter's mainstay in the new army), and still captain of Peter's old Bombardiers; in the navy-to-be, he held admiral's rank. Of his five decorations, the Order of St. Andrew was the most prized. He was also, at that time, trying to buy the title of Duke of Courland.

Alexis was nothing. His new duties separated him from his wife and his coterie at Moscow. Being both weak and resentful, Alexis took to taverns and prostitutes. He made the serious mistake of keeping one prostitute with him, and relying on her. Being assertive as well as weak, he talked when drunk. Probably he understood well enough that the lackeys and



military guards who attended him were spies, but he could not keep from talking and writing cryptic notes to his old friends in Moscow.

Reports laid before Peter, and Menshikov, began to quote curious and incredible sayings of the boy: "What is to be will come to pass . . . they will feel the stake in their vitals . . . those people of my father's and the stepmother . . . as for the fleet they talk about, it is nothing but bad wood—it will sink . . . *that city* will sink into its marshes."

Probably this maundering about his fleet and his city stung Peter. They were part of his confused vision of the future. In that future lay the state to which he had bound himself in service, but which he had not visualized as yet. For all the favorite's sins, Menshikov had aided him in that service, while Alexis had been an obstacle at every turn. Abruptly Peter wrote his son a perfectly honest letter.

"You need to be nourished like a stray bird. You will not learn, in anything. . . . You argue that a matter like warfare can be left to generals. That is not so. The people follow the example of their leader. Besides, if you know nothing of warfare, how can you command those who do? . . . I do not ask work from you but good-will, which your sickness need not affect. Ask someone who remembers my brother [Feodor, the tsar]. He was certainly much sicker than you. For that reason he could not ride powerful horses. Yet he constantly cared for horses and kept them before his eyes, so that his stable was, and is to this day, the best in Russia. With you, I feel that the inheritance of what I am doing will be in the hands of one slothful as the servant in the Scriptures. Here I have been cursing and striking you all these years, to no effect. . . . I have thought long before writing this last appeal to you. I will wait now to see if you will mend your ways. I have never spared myself, or anyone else. Be sure that if you do not make yourself useful after a little while, I shall disown you. Be sure that I will do it, even if you are my only son. Better to have ability from outside than rubbish on the inside."

No one ventured to intercede between Peter and his son. Alexis appealed to his friends, who advised him to answer

boldly. That was almost impossible for the boy whose dread of Peter and Menshikov had become an obsession. Then his wife died in Moscow after giving birth to a boy, who was christened Peter.

When Alexis answered his father, he followed the advice of the tutors, priests, and boyars who had begun to form a party around him. If he was unfit, he replied, then let him remove from public duties and live his own life in the country.

Beneath the apparent frankness of this, Peter sensed an effort to gain time. By then, informed of the opposition in Moscow, he thought of his son as a weapon that might be used against his own work. No evidence appeared of a plot against Peter's life; but unquestionably the silent alliance of boyar families, of Old Believers, conspiring priests, and reactionaries would seek to keep Alexis alive in retirement until Peter's death.

In Petersburg the tsar had had one of his worst attacks—attended for days by his surgeon, with priests waiting in the other room to give him the last sacrament. Always inclined to take action quickly, he felt the need of deciding the issue of his son without delay or half measures.

He wrote Alexis that there were only two alternatives, to join in actual service to the state, or to enter a monastery as a monk.

Alexis' advisers had no doubt which course to take. "The hood," they told him, laughing. "It won't be nailed on your head."

To this Alexis agreed. Again he made the mistake of writing to his prostitute companion, "I am about to become a monk, compelled to do so by force."

Before he could act, he had another letter from his father, who was journeying west. It was casual in tone, urging Alexis if he wished to remain tsarevich to join him at army headquarters.

Again Alexis consulted his companions and again they advised him to protect himself—probably sensing a threat in Peter's more casual suggestion. If Alexis were in actual danger, no monastic cell would put him out of Peter's reach. No refuge of any kind would serve, within the lands of Rus. So

they reasoned. And they advised Alexis not to go to his father but to take refuge at a foreign court.

Vienna was the logical place to take shelter, for Alexis was related now by marriage to the emperor; Vienna had never inclined toward the Great Tsar of Rus, and the Hofburg could surely shelter a fugitive. Only an aged tsarevna, a great-aunt who remembered the conspiracies of Sophia's day, advised him against flight. "Wherever you go, Peter will find you."

Telling Menshikov that he was starting to join his father at Copenhagen, Alexis set out along the northern road, with only his mistress, and detoured down to Vienna.

Probably Menshikov's informers had followed the boy's route, because twenty-five days after he left Petersburg, the favorite sent a message by courier to Peter that Alexis had not been heard from. And at once Peter got in touch with the court at Vienna. (Alexis had been tracked to Vienna.) Austrian accounts describe the boy as coming in exhausted and hysterical, trying to explain that Menshikov had taught him to drink heavily, while his father had broken him down with hard labor. Then he begged for some beer.

The Viennese court informed the Russian embassy that it had no knowledge of the tsar's son.

### *The Case of Alexis in Vienna*

An officer of the Russian embassy picked up Alexis' trail, and identified him as an obscure refugee, Kokhausky by name, apparently confined under arrest in a Tyrol fortress. One of the most astute of Peter's diplomats, Count Tolstoy—who, with Shafirov, had been released by the Turks—was sent to Vienna to work with the embassy and the talented officer at the difficult task of getting Alexis out of the emperor's protection, back on Russian soil. (By then the frightened tsarevich had been removed to the castle of St. Elmo at Naples, with only his girl companion to attend him. And thither he had been trailed by Russian agents.)

His mission was accomplished adroitly by Tolstoy and his officers, who made good use of the scarcely veiled threat of

Peter's anger. Having gained permission to interview Alexis, they managed to make two things clear to the stubborn boy: first, that if he returned he would have his father's forgiveness; second, that if he refused he would be excommunicated by the Church. They showed him letters from Peter. They kept telling him that it was useless to try to escape—he would always be found.

Alexis resisted stubbornly. His fear was too overmastering to be broken down by Peter Tolstoy's clever brutalities, administered under the pretense of friendly pleading.

Tolstoy himself realized that he had to deal with something frozen and animallike. "We'll have to melt down that brute," he announced.

It was done quickly enough. Alexis held to his one safeguard, the protection of the Emperor Charles. He also clung to the girl Afrosina, who was handsome and vain and stupid. Her casual and interested affection he took to be love. Around her his neurotic imagining had shaped a hope as confused as it was impossible—the two of them married and living in some country house, secure from terror. Such a concept Afrosina did not share. So much is clear from their letters.

Apparently Tolstoy needed no more than a small amount of gold to turn this reliance and this hope against Alexis. One of the secretaries at St. Elmo confided to Alexis that the emperor was vexed at his presence and would be glad to be rid of him.<sup>5</sup> Then Tolstoy and the governor of the castle explained to the boy that Afrosina would not be allowed to remain with him, because her presence made a bad situation worse. That broke down Alexis' resistance. He asked weakly for assurance that the two of them could be married and allowed to retire to the country to live. Those assurances Tolstoy gave readily.

A Slav to the core, when Alexis submitted to the domination of his father, he made no further attempt to resist. He asked, and was allowed, to visit the shrine of St. Nicholas at Bari. At Venice, although the Emperor Charles was known to be present in the city, Alexis made no effort, apparently, to see him. While they were in Venice Afrosina occupied herself buying silk garments and jeweled ornaments.

It was Charles who had misgivings when he learned that Alexis was being taken north. He sent instructions to the governor of Brünn, a certain Count Morawsky, to arrange to talk with Alexis apart from the others, and find out what the boy was doing and why. At Brünn—the last fortress on the road to Poland—Morawsky did try to interview Alexis.

Evidence as to what happened there is conflicting. Unquestionably Morawsky did not succeed in talking with Alexis alone, and the boy gave no indication that he was returning to Moscow unwillingly. Tolstoy insisted on leaving Brünn at once; Morawsky had no instructions to stop him. In this dilemma the governor of Brünn fell back on the time-honored recourse of subordinates, and sent to Vienna for further orders.

Alexis was taken back to the Kremlin as if returning from an ordinary journey abroad. Publicly, Peter announced that his son was reconciled to him, and would retire to the country to live, as he wished; privately, he promised Alexis that the marriage with Afrosina might be carried out, quietly.

Actually, Alexis seemed to find relief in submission, while Peter found himself facing an almost insoluble problem. Around his son had centered the mute opposition to himself. That opposition had no leader and no coherent plan. Its strength was the tenacity of the old customs, voiced by monks and Old Believers. It embraced Eudoxia in her cell, many boyars in their council, the Old Believers in their settlements.

What tangible thing had Peter to set against this opposition? As yet he had no substitute for the patriarch of the Church, or for the vitiated council. His strength lay in the circumstance that he was waging a war, with the resources of Rus. But he had been doing that now for nearly eighteen years. As yet he had no final victory to offer. He had no successor, to occupy the throne after him, except Alexis.

His weakness lay in the fact that he could not sever from his own being the longing for that old way of life in which he could feast and drive a shambling gig from his cabin by the river, where Catherine could minister to the pain that plagued him increasingly.

*Peter's Other Self*

His nostalgia for the old was strengthened by another trait, not so noticeable. Peter was, in a very real sense, an oriental. It showed in his love of display, of pantomime, in his innate suspicion of western minds, and his clumsiness when dealing with them. His tight-fitting European court dress he detested—changing as quickly as possible to the beloved kaftan, with fur cap and deerskin boots.

One feast he ordered to be that of the "Khan of the Samoyeds," with the guests appearing as natives of eldest Siberia. Peter's whole milieu, of favorites, fools, dependable Russians, and hired foreigners, was as thoroughly eastern as his delight in fireworks. It was the court of Jahangir the Moghul rather than that of Louis XIV. Peter, who never willingly sat on a throne, expected all who attended him to bow to his will. His smallest inclination assumed great importance, to gratify him Dolgorukys and Galitzins rowed their skiffs solemnly along the Petersburg canals and some of them brought their wives to have teeth extracted by the tsar, who kept a bag filled with the teeth of his aspirant-patients. The sons of great nobles, sent abroad by command of the tsar to study navigation, fortification, and other *sciences*, were often examined by Peter himself when they returned—many did not return, and groups of *émigrés* were growing in Venice, Toulon, as well as in Peking—and if they failed to give the right answers to his questions, they might be ordered into the ranks of the fools and jesters who spied for him as well as amused him. (He was very gentle with his dwarfs, paying them gravely for their services, and often supervising their funerals, ordering everything from hearse to prayer book to be made small, to the dwarfs' size.)

He had a way of answering in parables. When his new alliance with Denmark somehow went wrong, he dismissed it with the remark, "Two bears never get along in the same pen." Distrusting law men and disliking the western sport of card playing, he said, "Lawyers are like gamesters; they arrange the cards so they will win."

Only an eastern mind could have endured Menshikov, and profited by him. Alexashka Menshikov had greater skill than Peter in everything except physical strength, and determination. Whitworth observes shrewdly that Peter did not wish the Whispering Favorite to learn to read; ostensibly Menshikov could not do so, actually he could. His stables and carriages had all the show of the German emperor's, while Peter took the first vehicle that came along, borrowing one of Menshikov's coaches for necessary state display.

Like Lefort, Menshikov accumulated wealth as if by natural process. He dared set up gallows under his own name to execute offenders; he planted stakes with his shield of arms in villages through the Ukraine and Karelia, provinces which had never been awarded to him. The treasures of captured cities disappeared from the rolls of the Moscow Treasury; when Peter ordered cloth and metalwork factories built, Menshikov and Shafirov built them readily, established state monopolies, and manned them with serf labor. When an army division under his orders ran out of supplies and the troops were on the edge of starvation, Menshikov broke into the sealed warehouses of the province and fed the division.

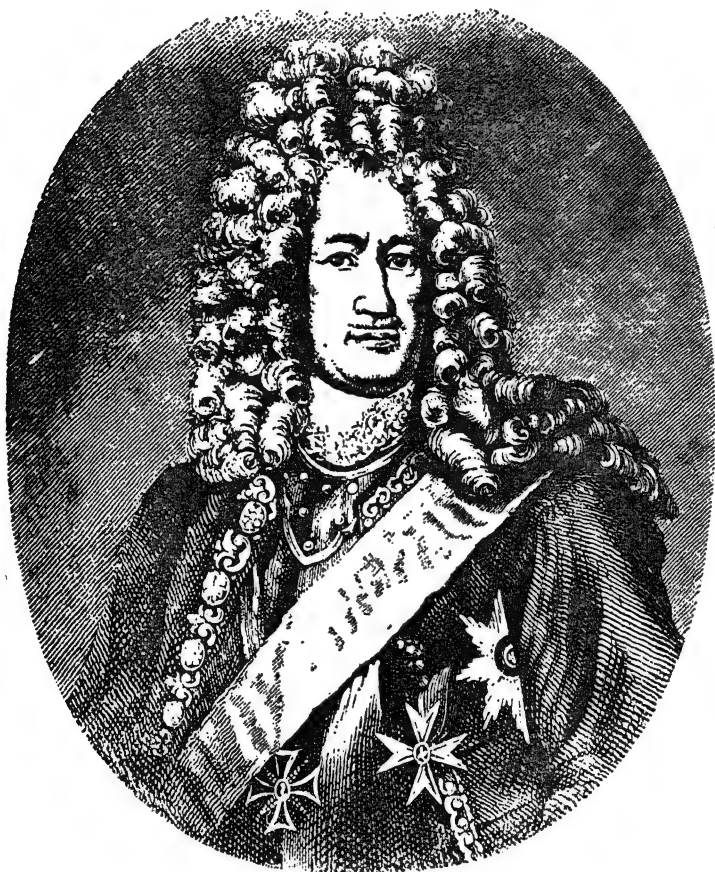
When Peter had one of his spells of black depression, he lashed out at Menshikov as the cause of the evil he sensed around him. After the campaign on the Pruth, he showed the great favorite accounts which had some twenty thousand rubles missing.

"I took them for my own use," Menshikov admitted frankly, "after Poltava. You gave me authority to act, and I have done so in my fashion. If it is wrong, you should have told me before now."

In the way of money, Peter drew out for himself only his pay as admiral—outside his hereditary income. It pleased him to draw, also, the kopeks he earned for a bit of carpentry or shoemaking.

An Alexashka Menshikov could not have existed at Versailles or at Vienna. In his fashion, he was as oriental as Peter in his. We have no western word for the tie between these strange and dominant personalities. Homosexuality has been mentioned often, but without evidence. The evidence points

the other way, to the women they shared and found for each other. Catherine, who had belonged to both of them, gave Menshikov her support, perhaps because she was still under



Alexander Menshikov, Peter's alter ego, who plotted to succeed him

the spell of his personality, perhaps because she understood that only by holding together could Peter's two favorites survive. With a peasant's shrewdness Catherine was grasping at shreds of security; she had her wedding, even if it was not a real one; even Menshikov made much over her daughters,



Anna and Elizabeth, sending them gifts, reminding Peter of their name days.

As yet Catherine claimed little for herself. Peter's obsession of the moment was the talented daughter of Kantemir, the refugee hospodar from the Pruth. Catherine did not interfere with Maria, but when Peter showed an interest in a handsome maid at court, Catherine took the girl into her personal service. When Peter encountered her in Catherine's room, he stared at her blankly, and Catherine said, "She is pretty, isn't she? Can I have her?" After that Peter left the girl alone.

He needed Menshikov. In his rages he could torment his favorite but he would never condemn Menshikov to death; he fed upon the Lithuanian's mind, as Menshikov fed upon Peter's power. Menshikov was loyal only to himself; Peter devoted himself to service to the state that he meant to make a European state. He wrote truthfully, "I have not spared, and I do not spare my life for my fatherland."

While Menshikov put on western dress and took to western ways easily, Peter did so with difficulty. In doing so he was fighting the oriental and the Slav in himself.

As he had conquered his dread of water in childhood, and his paralyzing shyness in European society, he was trying now with all his savage determination to make himself a European monarch of that day.

But as the old survived in his fatherland and people, no matter what new forms were laid upon them, so the old survived in Peter himself.

### *The Lutheran Church and the Fleet*

Perhaps Peter's inward struggle is most clearly seen in these years of endeavor upon the Baltic, before the breakdown of Sweden. These happen to be the years between the marriage of his son Alexis (October 1711) and the death of Alexis (June 1718), five months after his return with Tolstoy to Moscow.

Once, in England, the Tsar of Rus had been quartered in the home of a Quaker. At the time he had been curious about Quakers and their ways. He never forgave them. Now, ma-

neuvering armies and planning marriages of state along the Baltic, he kept asking where Quakers could be found, and upon occasion he could be seen sitting gravely in their meetinghouses.

For this gangling giant in his sober moments was in search of an identification for God. In parodying the ritual of the Muscovite clergy, Peter had not attacked religion itself. For a long time he had found relief in singing with the choirs of the smaller churches; before the Pruth campaign he had accepted a solemn blessing at the Usspensky cathedral. Over the wine in the Petersburg tavern he had questioned mariners from the west about the Evangelist faiths. These men from the outer seas had felt Protestant religion to be a personal matter, not dependent upon a priestly hierarchy, whether of Rome or of Constantinople. This individualism impressed Peter.

Then in his first journey west, as Peter Mikhailov, he had come sharply into contact with religion in the small German states. There, it seemed, each ruler determined what the faith of his people should be. "*Cujus regio, ejus religio.*" It suited Peter perfectly, that a sovereign should decide the matter of worship for his people. Had not Vladimir the Splendid once decided, in that very fashion, upon Orthodox Christianity?

But Peter knew it to be impossible to impose such a faith as Lutheranism upon those same Orthodox Christians of Rus. While he refused to appoint a new patriarch, he had no alternative to offer. In practical matters of religion, however, he could do something. The second church to be built in his new city was Lutheran; in Petersburg the Protestant sects were not quarantined, as in the Sloboda, where he had first come into contact with them. He married Alexis to a Lutheran girl.

For himself, he could not think clearly about religion. It remained forever beyond his mental grasp. He might have understood the cry of an eloquent mystic of the east: "Lo, for I to myself am unknown, now in God's name what must I do?"<sup>76</sup> There was no one to tell him that.

Peter depended as much upon advice now as when he had been an amateur monarch in the Sloboda. The Russian populace, quick to invent nicknames, called his favorites "the

makers of the reign." In the day of Ivan the Terrible they had been only "the men of the time."

Peter had changed only in that he felt his responsibilities more acutely. And in the same measure his anxiety and uncertainty increased. While he had tried to divest himself of the trappings of the ancestral throne, he had not shed a whit of the responsibility of the Veliki Gosudar. He was still a despot in the oriental sense. He could delegate authority to Menshikov and Shafirov, but not responsibility.

In spite of the stream of ambassadors sent out into Europe, the great courts at Versailles and Vienna failed to grant him the title of emperor. Foreigners were invited to Moscow and Petersburg in a flood. Perhaps by advice of Leibnitz, Peter had ordered that no barriers be placed upon their entrance or exit (before then it had been almost impossible for foreigners like Gordon or Spathary to leave Muscovy). A Scot served as his personal physician. Another Scot, James Bruce—"Bruss" in the Russian records—had been added to his new team of diplomats headed by the versatile Shafirov and the ruthless Peter Tolstoy (the Von Papen of the Petersburg regime). Peter himself had picked up a young German, Ostermann, who had an uncanny knack of reading the minds of European diplomats across the council table.

The first list of commanders of the fleet assembling at Petersburg reads: "De Cour, Besemacher, Wessel, Waldron, Ivan Sinavin, and Squerscoff." Only one name is Russian. And, with Wessel, only Ivan Sinavin appears among the commanders of the great fleet ten years later. The other foreigners have dropped out. Peter's favorite, Apraksin, held supreme command, although it does not appear that he had gone to sea as yet. The foreigners took the ships to sea; Apraksin had the shore command where the Dutch outfitter Cruys supervised the shipbuilding. Even the Swedish officer Wede—wounded in the first brush on the Neva where Peter watched the capture of his bark—rose to high responsibility in the Petersburg shipyards wherein Peter had placed his hopes.

Those hopes were not being realized. No matter how many foreign experts he gathered about the drawing boards in the

Admiralty—often drawing sketches for experimental keels himself—there seemed to be endemic breakdowns between plans and finished, seaworthy craft. Our English officer speaks cautiously of “ships laid up . . . as it was impossible they should answer the design. So everybody with much caution forbore to speak of them, to avoid giving offense.” As late as 1718, he enumerates guardedly *A List of the Ships in Motion This Year*. Later, this becomes *A List of the Russian Fleet Lying at Anchor under Lemland in Line of Battle*. After that we find *A List of the Ships in a Condition to Go to Sea This Year*. Then, in 1721, this becomes *A List of the Tsar’s Fleet Capable of Going to Sea, Though Many of Them Not Equipped This Year*.

He remarks on the fine sailing qualities of one frigate, the *Katharina*, which the tsar often used for his rapid voyages. His journal adds that the tsar’s flag was hauled down on the *Katharina* and the tsar himself departed the eve of an unsatisfactory engagement with the Swedes.

Earlier than this Lord Whitworth had reported to his government that many Dutch-designed vessels of the embryo Petersburg fleet had faulty after structures and would break their backs in a heavy sea, while some were of such shallow draught that they would be driven on a lee shore in a moderate gale (i.e., they were not deep enough in the water to work their way against a wind).

For failure to accomplish results against Swedish shipping Vice-Admiral Cruys was tried by court-martial in 1713-14. Our Englishman’s journal gives the chief members of the court-martial as:

“Lord High Admiral Count Apraxin  
Rear-Admiral Peter Alexeivitz  
Captain-Commodore Alexander Menshikoff.”

Among the lesser members appears the name of Bering. He was Vitus Bering the Dane, who was to explore the east for Peter.

“Notwithstanding this court usually met by 4 o’clock in the morning [Peter’s hour of rising, at that time] and never missed a day . . . yet they were nearly three months before

they came to a resolution. . . . Vice-Admiral Cruys was adjudged to lose his life, but His Majesty had mitigated the sentence . . . to banishment to Kazan."

Another foreigner had been the first to fall before the influx of Peter's new favorites. He was old Andreas Vinius, the Russian-born Dutchman. His brain served Peter in all the earliest activities. Vinius had Menshikov's ability to accomplish whatever task was turned over to him. From the Pressburg days he had slaved quietly at getting new revenues for the always needy Treasury. Working alone to the east of Moscow, he had opened up some silver mines in the Urals and discovered copper. Recalled to Moscow in crises, he had cast cannon out of the post-Narva harvest of church bells, and improved upon the gunpowder made at Tula. He had started the transcontinental trade caravans toward China, and set up factories where he lectured on rudimentary mathematics.

At the same time Vinius had lined his own pockets, and the new coterie had no difficulty in proving it. Many others had gleaned private fortunes in the same way, and Vinius merely bribed Menshikov to exonerate his accounts. This Menshikov did in a letter to Vinius, at the same time informing Peter privately that the old Dutchman was past justification.

Usually Peter's European experts lasted no longer than Cruys or Ogilvy. As a rule they could not accomplish results with the tools and workmen at their disposal. Often they departed homeward, or accomplished negligible results while drawing large salaries (which were not always paid—one English captain, John Perry, states that he received one year's pay in fourteen years although he had been in charge of the work on the Don-Volga canal and had been recalled to plan the drainage canal system of Petersburg itself).

Naturally in such conditions there was both misunderstanding and jealousy between them and their ill-paid Russian co-workers. Rarely could the best of the foreigners get a crew of any sort together with an armament on a seaworthy vessel.

An English captain, Andrew Simpson—Peter was replacing his Dutch technicians with Danes and English—who had succeeded in taking four ships from Azov to Constantinople after "the capitulation of Pruth," was ordered to sail three vessels

from Archangel into the Baltic. Simpson got his ships started after impressing crews "out of the foreign merchants' service" but was delayed and caught by ice in the Arctic, where he had to winter. Ivan Sinavin was sent to take over and bring the ships in the next year.

Peter made ingenious contributions to the outfitting of the longed-for fleet. From German schools he brought an entire company "learned in the art of gunnery" and classed as bombardiers. A special powder appeared "for the quicker firing of guns." Two ships had spouts for liquid fire. The tsar himself invented a new kind of boarding bridges, to be hinged to the gunwales of each ship. After one cruise at sea these boarding bridges were laid quietly away.

Not that Peter lacked mechanical sense. But no *ukaz* could transform an agricultural people like the Slavs into seamen in a few years. Nor could foreigners weld together Russian crews through the medium of the High Dutch dialect.

The endemic disputation at Kronstadt and Petersburg was not helped by Peter's habit of holding discussions during wine banquets. Sometimes Apraksin, when drunk, wept under a tempest of abuse, and on occasion he stormed at Peter. The journal relates how a dispute between two foreign rear admirals, Sievers and Gordon, was taken up late at the table by Peter and Apraksin: ". . . Sievers, thoroughly acquainted with the Russian freedom in liquor, took no notice, but left the company. Gordon, totally ignorant of the Russian language, . . . was silent. Nevertheless the dispute was carried very high between the Tsar and the General-Admiral. Count Apraxin declared that he looked upon Gordon and his associates as men of malevolent principles . . . caballing to foment divisions in Russia. However in the end the Tsar obliged the General Admiral to submit, and the assembly broke up.

"In the morning the Tsar, reflecting on what had passed, waited upon the General-Admiral and . . . said, 'I was drunk last night.'"

It was an old Russian custom of course to thresh things out over the cups. But Peter seemed to find it hard to endure the strain of a staff conference unless relaxed by rousing drinking. We have seen him wandering, irresolute, among the carriages

of the foreigners at the Pruth where the fate of his army was being decided; the navy-to-be, however, was peculiarly his own creation, and he would have his say upon it. (Often after prolonged drinking that broke down either Apraksin or Menshikov, Peter would clear his mind and give perfectly sound directions.)

Inevitably, in Moscow, popular complaint rose against the new naval ukazi. "We already have a German army, now we must have a Dutch *navy*. Among our fathers, when was ever such talk of a *navy* heard?" Boyars complained that the tsar who sent their sons out of the land to foreign schools now drafted their peasants "to be set afloat."

### *Judgment of a Dolgoruky*

Inevitably, also, there came up at a banquet the argument as to what Peter was accomplishing, compared to his father Alexis. When someone remarked that Alexis had accomplished little, and that only by aid of his ministers, Peter was irritated.

"I do not like either your blame of my father's work or your praise of mine," he retorted.

Stalking over to the chair of one of the elder statesmen, a Dolgoruky, "You of all men," he said, "have spoken to me what is true . . . what is your judgment of my father's actions, and what is your judgment of mine?"

Peter had appealed, not to one of his own coterie but to an oracle of elder Rus. Dolgoruky told him to go and sit down while he thought about the question. This Peter did obediently, waiting for the old man to finish pondering and pulling at his mustache. Then he was answered.

There were, the oracle proclaimed, three chief works of a tsar. First, the inward governance of Rus; second, the work of war; third, the dispensation of justice.

In the first, Dolgoruky decided, Peter had accomplished less than his father, but he still had time before him to remedy that.

In the second, Dolgoruky felt grave doubt. Peter had been forced to start from new beginnings; he had accomplished so

much that he might surpass the work of his father. Yet only the end of the Swedish war could decide that.

In the third, Dolgoruky decided that Peter would be judged by the work of the ministers he chose, and a sagacious tsar would choose those who spoke the truth rather than those who lied to him.

But as to building a fleet—"you have advantaged the state more than your father."

Listening patiently to the old man, Peter went over and kissed him, calling him a faithful servant—thereby angering Menshikov.

### *Purge of Moscow and Execution of Alexis*

Tolstoy delivered the fugitive Alexis at the Kremlin on the last day of January 1718. For two weeks there were open indications of quiet and reconciliation, while Peter appeared in public with Alexis, and a rumor of the boy's coming marriage got around. Friends of Alexis, and all who had been connected with him in any way, waited for this appearance of forgiveness to end, to discover what blow would be struck and at whom. No one in Moscow, apparently, took Peter's public promise of forgiveness seriously. That, they understood, had been part of the process of getting the tsarevich back to the Kremlin.

February 18 an assemblage of boyars and clergy was called. Before the gathering at the Uspensky cathedral, Alexis, weak and frightened, stood forward and swore that he renounced all claim to the tsardom. On his part Peter swore that although his son had deserved the death punishment for forsaking him, Alexis had his forgiveness and would be "immune from all punishment."

This demonstration increased rather than lessened the tension in Moscow. The next day Alexis, alone with his father, half hysterical and warned that only by a full statement of his actions in the past could punishment be avoided, answered questions put to him, giving names, dates, and conversations as he remembered them. This he was asked to put in writing.



When he had finished his writing; the general questioning began. Evidence yielded by that questioning appears to have been as follows.

Alexander Kikin, Alexis' closest friend, known for his hatred of Menshikov, testified that he had advised the boy, among other matters, to escape to Vienna.

Vasily Dolgoruky, a boyar of the old families, antagonistic to Menshikov, testified to subversive conversations. (He had been brought in chains from Petersburg to give evidence.)

The Bishop of Rostov testified that in talk with Eudoxia, the tsaritsa, he had prophesied that she might return to the palace, as the acknowledged tsaritsa, Peter being dead.

One of Alexis' confessors testified that the boy had admitted that he longed for his father's death.

Eudoxia, fetched from her convent, testified that Alexis had sent her messages and had come to the convent before leaving for Vienna to give her five hundred rubles.

The tsaritsa-nun was not tortured. Her questioning continued long. Nothing came out to indicate a conspiracy between her and Alexis, but evidence of another kind turned up. Eudoxia had been given fur garments by a certain Major Glebov in command of the guard set about the convent. More than that, Glebov had talked with her intimately in the garden and in her rooms. They had exchanged rings. When he had ceased his visits she had written some notes to him.

These notes were found and read. In their wording appeared an endearing term—*batko* (father mine). "I suffer and only God knows how dear thou art . . . wearest thou the ring I gave thee? . . . has any evil happened? . . . do they speak ill of me? . . . I send thee a neckcloth."

Bits of a woman's spirit appeared in these notes. The woman was middle-aged, cloistered; she had been tsaritsa. Yet she had written like an enamored girl, to a handsome officer.

Smaller people were questioned also, but they contributed no evidence of an actual plot. Action came very quickly after the first questioning.

Kikin suffered "severe knouting"—that is, the knouting with metal-tipped lashes that took off fragments of flesh continually

—and was killed on the wheel. The bishop died also under torture.

Dolgoruky was stripped of possessions and exiled beyond the Urals. Glebov alone seems to have been given a “severe” death, being set on a stake. Various kinsmen and friends of Eudoxia went into exile. She herself was moved to a cell in the north, at Ladoga, more distant from Moscow.

There were, then, a very few executions after the February questioning. The testimony, however, had added to Peter’s anxiety, not on Alexis’ account but on his own. No particle of evidence had shown a conspiracy to be planned. The evidence had passed through his son, as if through a viscous body, to strike against Peter himself. His first wife had turned from his memory to gaze upon a common handsome soldier; priests had spoken of his death as a deliverance; boyars of integrity had condemned him in talk. Alexis, who had fled from him, cringed in visible fear of him. Because of Alexis, the court in Vienna must be ridiculing him.

This silent antagonism baffled Peter. He could not come to grips with it. . . . When he had stood on the Red Stair, a boy younger than Alexis, he had seen the “long beards” crowding up with their flashing halberds . . . he had made them feel the bitter taste of death after a time . . . they had not struck at him . . .

One of those bearded bodies he had watched for a moment lashed down upon a wooden wheel after its back had been broken and the turns of the wheel had broken its arms. One broken arm had moved up to wipe blood dripping from the lips, instinctively. Then the tortured eyes had sighted drops of blood on the wooden wheel, and the arm had moved again, instinctively, to wipe the stain from the wood . . . such bodies were strong, unreasoning. Only by strength could fear be instilled in them . . . he had crushed the revolt of the frontiers easily by sending Sheremet’ev and two regiments.

Now, old and fat and wealthy, the Marshal Sheremet’ev was turning against the tsar because he hated Menshikov, who was necessary. The Dolgorukys, the Galitzins were against him, joining hands with the ghosts of other days. Even the

brilliant young statesman Boris Kuragin, his cousin, sympathized with Eudoxia.

In sending Eudoxia farther away, he brought closer upon him the forces of antagonism that had gathered around her.

For two months he could not decide how to act. Afrosina was brought to Moscow to be questioned. She told Peter readily enough what Alexis had confided in her. Alexis had talked about the rebellion on the frontiers, and had wondered if there would be mutiny in Moscow, during the war. Moscow, he had argued, was his city. Petersburg would remain what it was, a small port on an icebound gulf. After his father's death there would be civil war, between the favorites with the women, and Alexis' friends.

Again, in the testimony of the girl Afrosina who agreed to everything, there were only *thoughts* spoken aloud.

Week after week Peter hesitated, seeing Alexis come before him wet with the sweat of fear, or inanely hopeful, now that Afrosina had come back and had not been harmed.

Peter asked for a verdict from the higher clergy. The verdict, written down, took the form of quotations from the Scriptures, and at the end: "The heart of the tsar is in the hand of God."

A foreign diplomat wrote: "This city is as if stricken by the plague, the people being divided into accusers and accused."

A High Court of Justice obediently attached its one hundred and twenty-seven signatures to a verdict condemning Alexis, and handed the verdict to Peter.

After that, there was no other evidence that could be gathered, and no other authority that could be called to pass on the question of Alexis' guilt or innocence.

June 14, the tsar's son was confined in the new Peter and Paul Fortress at Petersburg. June 19, he was lashed with the knout, and again on the twenty-fourth. On the twenty-sixth he died.

The next day the anniversary of Poltava was celebrated.

Peter had killed Alexis as certainly as Ivan the Terrible had struck down his son with his steel-tipped staff. Ivan had acted

in a fit of anger, Peter after more than four months of hesitation. In that long irresolution did he visualize Alexis as the embodiment of resistance against him? Did he come to believe that his son was the passive obstacle to his own course of action? Or did he simply end by the simplest action his own long torment of indecision?

There is no certainty. Unlike Ivan, Peter appeared impassive after Alexis died. The day after the body was exposed in the Church of the Trinity, he attended the festivity of the launching of a ship built after his own plans, named the *Marsh Sprite*.

In that year Peter Alexeivich was forty-six, weakened by hysterical convulsions and by alcoholism. His state was in transition, without an effective government; his new city was no more than half built; his war unfinished. By destroying Alexis he had rid himself of the heir of his dynasty, that had ruled Rus for a century. In Peter's scheme of things no other heir existed—only Menshikov and the daughters of the Livonian servant girl, Catherine.

Incapable of realizing the full consequences of his actions, and stubbornly attached to his companions of the year, Peter could gain understanding of his greater dilemma only by degrees, and then only when faced by concrete difficulties. When he did understand, he fought his troubles with unbreakable determination. For he had the strength of the body he had watched on the wheel with back broken, moving a broken arm instinctively to wipe at its lips.

The first of his great difficulties to become clear to his understanding was the war itself.

In that year 1718 Charles XII of Sweden also died. Very much like that other knight-errant, Richard I of England, the Swedish leader was killed besieging a small fortress of no importance—in Norway as it happened.

Charles had performed miracles in minor combats, since his return from Turkey. At Stralsund his efforts had withstood the siege by the Russians and their allies. But the nation behind Charles had been crippled. One out of every two men had been drafted to fill up the ranks of the small armies with

which he tried to maneuver. His one advantage lay in the disunity of the allies attacking him.

The Baltic had become an area of shifting diplomatic groupings, wherein the two great states of the previous century, Poland and Sweden, were becoming powerless to resist, and in consequence were being fought over and dismembered. Prussia was growing, and Russia dominating the seaboard.

In this middle phase of the Great Northern War, Peter tried his hand at diplomacy. When his nieces were married to princes of the smaller Germanic states, opposition to the Russian intrusion stiffened along the North German seaboard. The diplomatic tangle was full of knots that Peter could not untie, even with the aid of Boris Kuragin and Ostermann and Shafirov. Before long he realized that his brilliant young statesmen were actually handicapped by the energetic interference of the tsar, and the presence of the massive Russian armies.

In the siege of a vital port, his supposed allies declared they had no need of Russian aid, and his troops were barred out after the capture of the port. The Anglo-Dutch fleets began to behave very coldly. The constant campaigning destroyed the rye and flax and hemp that had been the produce of the Baltic coast.

Although the larger ships of the Petersburg fleet could accomplish little outside the Gulf of Finland, a swarm of galleys—of the shipping used in rivers and lakes—captured the Åland Islands, lying off the Swedish coast, for Peter. But a carefully planned invasion of the Swedish coast was never carried out because the Danes and others held back interminably until finally the Russians withdrew to their end of the Baltic.

Then after Charles's death, Sweden agreed on a peace with all the varied powers except Russia.<sup>7</sup> Peter's emissaries—chiefly the all-competent Ostermann—had asked only for Viborg, the Karelian district where Petersburg lay, and the Livonian and Esthonian coast. The Swedes refused, as Charles had done before them.

The war went on.

*The Venture to Paris*

The year before, baffled by Baltic diplomacy, Peter had dashed off on the most remarkable of his journeys. Unable to break down the cold hostility of his former well-wishers in Holland and England, he had gone himself to the hub of European affairs, to Paris. Not only to Paris, but to a city still mourning the death of its *Grand Monarque*—a city whose religion had become culture, intolerant of other cultures.

Even when he landed at Dunkirk, with the invaluable Kuragin—and without Catherine—attended by a suite fifty-seven strong, Peter felt the rigidity of the French spirit. In contrast, from that first evening on French soil, he appears impulsive, incoherent, again a Muscovite giant with the mind of a boy. Unable to understand the French, he seeks relief in a flurry of sight-seeing and note-taking. The French believe that he must be clowning, but he is not.

In Paris, Peter is on his best behavior. Great Duchesses of Berry and Orléans comment upon such a remarkable brute. He is only a Slav, and his Byzantine mind will not allow him to reveal what he came for until he can sense French thought, which appears equally remarkable to him.

He travels about headlong, in transparent incognito—a remembrance of Lefort's first European tour—refusing to accept quarters in the Louvre, or at the Arsenal either. Gargantuan meals are needed to satisfy him and the fifty-seven. When he dislikes a banquet he disappears, and is tracked to a tavern where he fares heartily among seamen, using the knife and spoon he takes from his belt.

When the seven-year-old boy who is King of France comes down the steps to greet him, Peter jumps from his carriage and catches up the child in his great arms. Yet in conference with the stately regent he is shy, illogical—despite Kuragin's efforts.

(Later on it develops that Peter's idea is to sound out the French mind as to a marriage between the boy king and the younger daughter of Catherine. Impossible, of course. This is not put forward too seriously. Much later Peter's real object

comes out—an alliance of friendship between France and the new Russia that will end the Baltic imbroglio. That is hardly less impossible.)

Notebook in hand, the extraordinary tsar feasts himself on the sights of Paris—especially the Observatory, the botanical gardens and menagerie. He reviews gendarmes contentedly enough, yet has an awkward hour when he arrives at the Sorbonne at the wrong time. At the Opéra he asks for beer. In the Trianon gardens, probably by accident, he starts the fountains spraying over the brilliant assemblage of guests. But he studies scientific instruments and talks long with Delisle, the great geographer.

He talks also with John Law, the great financier of the day.

Hearing that Madame de Maintenon still lives, although ill, he is curious to meet this mistress-spouse of the renowned Louis XIV. He announces that he will visit her, and arrives unexpectedly to sit by her bed, at a loss how to converse with her. ("He asked me if I were ill. I replied that I was. He then caused me to be asked what was the matter with me. I answered, great age . . . he did not know what to say to me and his interpreter did not appear to hear what I said to him. His visit was very short. He is still in the house, but where I know not. He caused the curtains at the foot of my bed to be opened so that he might look at me." So runs a letter of Madame de Maintenon.)

"This monarch," St. Simon adds, "astonished Paris by his extreme curiosity on all points of government, and police. . . . He had the sort of familiarity that comes from unbounded freedom, but he was not without a trace of the barbarism of his country, which made him abrupt, with nothing certain about his wishes but the fact that not one of them was to be contradicted . . . his love of sight-seeing equaled his dislike of being made a spectacle himself. He preferred hired carriages; he would jump into the first carriage he met with, without caring to whom it belonged . . . however shabby might be his carriage, his natural manner of greatness could not be mistaken."

His visit causes gossip because he has with him the woman of Paris who is his mistress of the month. Gossip censures Peter

as stingy because he bestows only two gold pieces on her; he is niggardly in giving other tips also.

Yet upon leaving Paris he refuses costly gifts, and gives jeweled souvenirs instead to his French hosts—with more than a hundred thousand *livres* to be distributed by them among those who had served him. Whereupon he departs by coach to take the waters at Spa where Catherine awaits him.

In diplomacy Peter's descent upon Paris accomplished nothing decisive. The treaty drawn up later established better relations, formally between France and the Russian Empire, but the mutual-assistance pact did not appear in it. Peter, however, took away with him an abiding respect for the architecture of Paris. From that year, 1717, new construction in Petersburg was to assume classical French design, in pillared majesty. The son of the geographer Delisle was to journey to its Academy.

Meanwhile the Baltic conflict defied Peter's efforts to end it either by war or by a peace.

It was hard for Peter to understand. He had not asked for too much coast line on the Baltic—much less in fact than his armies held.<sup>8</sup> It had seemed to be a clever blow of the fist, to announce the day after the betrothal of his niece to Leopold, Duke of Mecklenburg, that the ports of Wismar and Warnemund would be added to Mecklenburg in the peace; but Kuragin had warned him against doing it. "Our allies," Kuragin had warned, "ask only one question now—when will the Russian armies withdraw?"

Certainly Peter's new armies had been victorious and never so powerful as now. The *General-Kriegs-Kommissar* had reported that he was supplying clothing and food and pay for 196,000 men. Then there were the 50,000 Ukrainian Cossacks subject to call, and more than 25,000 seamen in the new navy. Apraksin's report showed 27 vessels and 400 galleys in the Petersburg fleet, ranging from the *St. Alexander* of 70 guns to the *Natalia* of 14—in all 1333 cannon.

How could the Swedes hope to resist such a power of cannon, without their Charles? Reports from his spies in Stock-



holm showed that the fields were not being tilled, for lack of peasants. Kuragin thought that the Swedes were merely stubborn; they would not give up the eastern end of the sea they had called their sea; Ostermann believed that they hoped the Danes, English, and Dutch would turn antagonistic to Russia and so give aid to Sweden. Peter did not know which man was right.

No longer was he Bombardier Peter Alexeivich; no need had he now for a Gordon or an Ogilvy—the foreigners in his new armies were merely brigadiers, or they were the Russianized sons of the older generation. No Streletsi poisoned his regiments.

And yet—Sheremet'ev asked to be allowed to retire; the Dolgorukys avoided him. Informers reported dissension in the regiments that had been kept from home for more than three years; also that men were listening to Lutheran evangelists, and wandering off after Lutheran girls.

It was as if, after the death of Alexis, he had opposed to him the unbroken ranks of elder Rus, the long beards and the lazy minds content to scratch the ground and feed themselves in settlements. These mires of the old days had not changed.

At the end of that year Peter the tsar made one of his sudden decisions and put away forever Bombardier Peter. He understood that the war must cease. To achieve that, he was willing to give back Finland, and withdraw entirely from all but the eastern end of the Baltic.

Still the war went on.

There was one change that he noticed. Documents from the west bore less and less frequently the word "Muscovy." They began to adhere to the word "Russia," and to address Peter himself as the Great Sovereign, and Tsar of Russia.

Moscow, it seemed, no longer represented in western thought the land and the people. The city was losing its importance, leaving the tsar paramount.

Peter applied himself again to the task of building fleets, and forty thousand men labored at the buildings and canals of Petersburg.

*Pastor Gluck's Academy*

The new buildings were planned to be like those in the west. Their outer shells went up rapidly enough. Ten years before, Cornelius Le Bruyn had been surprised to find hospitals in Moscow almost completed during his absence in Persia. The largest he discovered to be a dispensary for the armed forces—on the site where he had last seen a poultry market. It was being painted, the walls decorated “with Chinese syrup pots, on top of which the arms of His Tsarian Majesty are enamelled. . . .

“Very beautiful halls serve as a laboratory and a library, wherein extraordinary plants and animals are preserved. . . . The doctor has even power to punish with death those who are under his direction. The director is Doctor Areskine [Erskine], a Scotchman and first physician to His Tsarian Majesty who allows him a yearly pension of 1500 ducats. Eight apothecaries are employed in this dispensary; and from hence His Majesty's troops and navies are supplied with all the drugs and medecines they want.

“His Majesty made Doctor Areskine a present of 2000 crowns when he engaged in this great and arduous work. He seemed to be persuaded, when I left Moscow, that everything would be completed in the space of a year. . . .”

In another new hospital Le Bruyn counted thirty-four beds, ready for sixty-eight patients. Beside this last he noticed a completed cloth factory run by a Dutchman, and a shop where mirrors were made.

After his departure, in the great conflagration of 1712, thirty-five hospitals are said to have burned down in Moscow.

For nearly twenty years Gottfried Leibnitz had been in correspondence with Peter. Only at rare intervals, and then with the aid of James Bruce, had Peter answered. On his part, the persistent Leibnitz had obtained much accurate information about Russia from the Hollander Witzen. Once Witzen, who kept in touch with friends in Peking as well as Moscow—he had a great respect for Spathary's work—wrote, “It is

certain that unrest at home has been great during his [Peter's] absence . . . but he has nothing to fear from the friends of those condemned to death, because the custom is to send to Siberia, and to the furthest places, the wives, children and even the relatives of those who have been executed. . . ."

Gottfried Leibnitz had only the vaguest concept of Russia, let alone Siberia; and what little factual knowledge he had, Witzen supplied. China and Russia the German scientist visualized as emerging from the darkness of ignorance. Between the Manchu empire and Europe, the Muscovite tsar was destined to serve as intermediary . . . it was all pontifical and effusive and most of it Peter had realized already. More clearly Leibnitz visualized himself employed by this tsar to "debarbarize" his people. He coveted that appointment and wrote voluminously to gain it. Continually he emphasized to Peter the importance of schooling the young—"we have to reflect that there will be more difficulty with the older people, inclined to drunkenness; our only hope will be in teaching the young folk."

That teaching, he pointed out, should be "centralized" in an Academy (of which Leibnitz might, conceivably, be the head) to instruct the nation as a whole.

The concept of sending the pick of the nation to school in a great academy of the arts and sciences caught Peter's interest. Very early he experimented with it. It was christened the Gymnasium at first, put into a building in Moscow, and given as a head a Lutheran pastor brought in from Marienburg—Catherine's former master. Pastor Gluck himself was to teach such things as geography, rhetorical Latin, and German and French dancing steps. Unfortunately Gluck, an enthusiast in his own way, turned the Lutheran prayer book into crude Russian verse and had his pupils learn it by singing. The pupils—sons of boyars and foreign soldiers and well-known merchants—took their schooling as a new kind of punishment, and when the Moscow parents found out what the songs actually meant, the school was closed.

A school of medicine rose on the banks of the Yauza; professors arrived from Leyden, and then from Scotland. To one of these last, Peter guaranteed that he would have a certain

number of pupils; still, truants fled from the new learning. A House of Comedy appeared in the Red Place. There "singing pieces" were heard, performed by foreign maestros, with interpreters borrowed from the Ambassadors' Bureau to explain the opera to the audience.

Naturally enough, Petersburg soon had its Academy, and equally as a matter of course, it was a Marine Academy teaching navigation and naval science to other sons of the gentry, compelled by imperial ukaz to endure this confinement. And very soon indeed the Marine Academy had a scientist from Paris. After his long struggle with shipping, Peter turned against Dutch technicians—who were, after all, like the English—his political ill-wishers of the moment. He started a cycle of French schooling after his descent upon Paris. The Scots remained on, chiefly as physicians and soldiers. By now the foreigners had ceased to play the part of ministers and commanders—actual or ghostly—and had become simple instructors. Gottfried Leibnitz never obtained the appointment to his "centralized" Academy; he was given a small salary and his letters were read carefully.

It seemed clear to Peter and his advisers that by giving western schooling to Slavic minds he could raise his subjects to the level of westerners. In some mysterious fashion, however, this process of uplift seemed to fail. Or even if a Russian student came back from Leipzig with a practical knowledge of physics, he found no means at home to apply that skill.

Here—in dealing with the enduring problem of the oriental with a mechanistic schooling—Peter achieved his happiest success. If *things* must be supplied as tools for the new wisdom, he would supply them. Hence the rush of dispensaries, first in Moscow, then in Petersburg, Revel, Kazan, and Narva. Libraries went up also, to be crammed with books. To get more books, printing was fostered, and paid for. Since the old Slavonic did not fit well into type design, Peter experimented with a simpler Russian alphabet.

In this new type the first newspaper was published. With his year of decision, 1718—when he turned back to cope with "inward" development of his people—we find an *Oberpolizeimeister* (the Portuguese, Devier, who had risen from cabin

boy to be chief of police and to be beaten by Peter's fists because of a broken bridge) issuing printed rules for conduct. A *Mirror for Youth* appeared in print, along with a volume on the victories gained in the Northern War. Peter himself revised the manuscript of a volume "on the measuring of the earth" in the new Russian letters. A very different book was published, entitled, *The Tale of the Warlike Exploits of the Tsar*.

### *The Ancient Stones and the Strange Bones*

Before then Leibnitz had listed certain aids to learning . . . "the theatre, both of art and nature, souvenir cabinets, galleries of antiquities, statues and paintings, zoos (*vivaria*) of living animals, botanical gardens, factories, studios, arsenals, wood-working shops . . ." These exhibits and practical workshops, it seemed, were to aid the great undertaking of the national educational center to "debarbarize" the Russians. "His Tsarian Majesty may found a college which, in his name, should have the direction of the studies, arts and sciences, in his empire. . . . This college will have under its supervision all schools, and all head instructors, printing, everything dealing with books and the supply of paper, medicine and drugs, also salt works, and mines, and in addition inventions and manufacturing, the experimentation with new varieties of vegetables and materials and trades—in a word, it will become a college of [national] health, of minerals, watchful of means of subsistence, and every subject of the Tsar ought, under penalty of severe punishment, to assist this college in every possible way to accomplish its purpose."

Probably His Tsarian Majesty fumed at the prolixity of the illustrious German. But the blueprint of the central "college," administered by himself, and in turn reaching out toward the minds and the resources of his dominion, remained fixed in his memory. And that memory was capable of recalling very clearly details of a decade before. By degrees the term "college" became connected up with other concepts for inward improvement, with consequences never anticipated by Leibnitz.

For Gottfried Leibnitz had made the mistake of thinking of Muscovite minds as *tabula rasa*. So he described them in his letters—thinking of simple barbarians uncontaminated by previous schooling, and in consequence eager to be filled—like “new, untainted vessels”—with modern philosophy. But the Slavic minds were by no means clean tablets or vessels either. They were filled with the imagery of their mysticism, with age-old fears and longings that drove them to gather together by running water to sing, or to shed their new clothes and run away to the forest.

Peter understood this. He shared those fears and longings. He played the showman to his people, with his troupes of dwarfs and military parades. Like children, they would take the hand of a madman and would close their minds to the preaching of a logician. So much he realized. For one of his new line-of-battle ships he designed a figurehead—St. Peter piloting a small boat rowed by children. Near his city he urged the building of a great monastery christened after Alexander Nevsky, the hero-tsar of old days.

With such *things* he managed well. But he never gained touch with his people as human beings. To the Slavs, who had an inbred love of folk dancing and singing, he gave the “singing piece” of *Hanswurst*, the German epic clown who amused him; he bewildered them with his trumpets and drums. Not because they hated him but because they hated the sea, his beloved ships became, to them, the “Dutch navy.”

They were accustomed to community dancing and pageants on feast days. Peter offered them operettas of a new kind—showing fanatical Old Believers walking in procession and wailing like blind men who cannot see where they are going—a bearded archpriest clamoring and weeping because his son was taken away to school—a chorus of smocked peasants and kaftaned merchants moaning for “the happy days of old” when they could sleep on stoves and scratch themselves on benches.

Peter had his own reasons for changing the central government to a Swedish model.

For one thing, Sweden had actual administrative colleges, *collegia*, stemming from Stockholm. As an experienced ship-

wright, Peter had learned that Russian-designed vessels did not function as well at sea as the Dutch and English designs. Was that not also true of a central state institutional system—to replace the archaic Prikazi? What *worked* in an intelligent neighboring country should work also in Russia.

For some time experts from Holstein and Saxony had been hired to report on the Swedish governmental system. In due course they had arrived in Petersburg with massive reports.

In this year of inward development—following the notes taken at Paris and the snub by the western maritime powers—Peter appointed presidents of new Swedish-model colleges and bade them have a working system prepared by the end of the year. In the Admiralty college-to-be he showed great interest. In the *Revision College* (Financial Control) were lumped together a half dozen of the old bureaus.

In this streamlining of governmental agencies, the Church was to take its place. No patriarch was appointed. Instead a Holy Synod presided over the affairs of the churches—a collegiate board, appointed by the tsar, administering the churches as a governmental activity similar to the *Collegium Berg und Manufactur*, the Office of Mines and Manufactures.

Throughout the land the saying was heard, "We have a German army, we have a Dutch navy, and now we have a Swedish government."

When snow still lay on the ground in 1718, an imperial ukaz aided the cause of the new science somewhat as Leibnitz had suggested but chiefly as Slavic minds understood how material was to be gathered for the museums-to-be.

"If anyone find in the earth, or in the water, any ancient objects, such as unusual stones, or the bones of man or beast, or of fishes or of birds, unlike those which are now with us, or such as are larger or smaller than usual, or any old inscriptions on stones, iron or copper, or any ancient weapon not now in use, or any vessel [vase or container] or such-like thing, ancient or unusual, let him bring all such things to us, and an ample reward shall be given him."

In due time a procession of monstrosities began to arrive at

Petersburg, including two-headed calves, twelve-fingered babies, and albino women.

Peter had galleries, now, in his new city, at least in Menshikov's palace on the island. Naturally, he took to the suggestion to adorn these galleries with "antiquities, statues and paintings" in which he had small interest himself. The agent sent to Paris to buy them was Lefort's nephew. From Venice came a marble Venus, "finer than the Venus in Florence because it had its limbs whole."

Portrait painters also arrived at Petersburg, to make pictures of the Russians and their city. For by now the tsar showed clearly his determination to make the city the milieu of the new order. From Petersburg should stem the education, not of the archaic days or of the Byzantine Church, but of Europe in the year 1718.

Just as clearly, Moscow, which reminded the people by every stone and tower of the dark past, was being abandoned. James Bruce, who had liked Moscow where the people "laid aside old costumes" and the ladies gave dances after instruction by Swedish officers, prisoners of war, relates that after the removal of one thousand of the great families to Petersburg the city became "quite deserted." He himself was assigned to work at the finishing of the Fortress of Peter and Paul, where he heard whisperings of the death of the Tsarevich Alexis. "Few believed he died a natural death, but it was dangerous to speak as they thought."

Across the river, Swedish prisoners of war labored at laying the stones of the great boulevard that skirted the river, the Nevsky Prospekt.

For a street to be paved not with logs or even hewn planks but with stone was a marvelous thing. Its like had never been seen in Russia although travelers returning from the outer world said that Paris had such streets.

### *The Case of Mary Hamilton*

Through the palaces of Petersburg where courtiers gossiped over their wine ran the tale of the execution of a girl who had been maid in waiting to Catherine.



The victim herself was of a great family, being Scottish in part, the granddaughter of Little Sergy Matviev, who had been killed by the Streltsi. Mary Danilovna Hamilton, she was. One of the new maids in waiting, one of the girls no longer confined to the terem, who appeared in European dress with bare face and shoulders among the motley men who crowded the great court, she was fair-looking and young, rather timid and shrinking. Such girls, unless protected by Catherine herself—or unless they had the good fortune to win marriage with a grandee—became the bedfellows of men who desired them.

Mary, perhaps, had better luck than most of her companions. Peter noticed her, and jested with her; she may have belonged to him momentarily. But Peter was at that time engrossed with a young woman of some position, Maria, the daughter of the hospodar of Moldavia, who had the wit to keep him in play, much to Catherine's dislike. No important person heeded Mary Hamilton, and the court in general assumed that she was being passed around among Peter's young attendants. Then it developed that she had come to love one of them, a handsome numskull of the rising Orlov family.

The shy and moody girl seemed to think of nothing but this Orlov, who did not feel bound to her. She even stole some jewels from one of Catherine's caskets to give Orlov, who turned the jewels into money, perhaps because he needed to aid Mary Hamilton in one matter, perhaps because he wanted the money himself. It was a trifling theft, one of scores that passed unnoticed as a rule.

Accident uncovered it. A paper of some importance to Peter vanished from his cabinet, and all the underlings of his circle were questioned about it. The intimacy of Mary Hamilton with Orlov came out in the questioning, although the girl herself admitted nothing. However, Orlov took fright under the questioning. Apparently he thought they had summoned him because of what he had done for Mary. Dropping to his knees, he begged for the imperial pardon, telling all that had taken place between him and the girl. He had helped Mary to smuggle out and kill one—or it might have been three—of the children she had borne him. And he had taken the jewels she stole.

Summoned for new questioning, Mary admitted all this. Still there was no great stir in Peter's circle over the case. In old Russia unwanted infants had disappeared often enough. Evidently neither Mary nor Orlov had taken the paper.

Yet Peter would not overlook the infanticide. By the law, a wife who killed her husband could be buried alive, up to her neck, and allowed to perish slowly while watched by guards. Peter had paused at times to study such victims, because passers-by often dropped coins by the head, and the guards would buy food or wine for the head with some of the coins, keeping others for themselves, and the whole proceeding troubled Peter vaguely. If a murderess had to die in this manner, a woman who put her child to death should lose her own life. And in Mary's case, Peter announced that she would be beheaded on the executioner's block.

Nor would he change his mind. Women banded together to persuade him. Catherine even asked the elder princesses to intercede for Mary Hamilton. Peter merely answered something about Saul and Ahab and the law. "I won't violate the law because of a kindly feeling."

There was no appeal from that decision. Nor did Peter allow it to be forgotten. Early in March 1719 he went himself to the block when Mary was led out, dressed in white trimmed with mourning black. When she staggered at the steps, he supported her with his arm. Some witnesses said that tears showed in his eyes. Then he turned away.

The same witnesses said that he lingered to keep the block in sight until Mary's head had been severed. After that he gave an order to preserve the head, and dismissed the case from his mind.

The girl's execution did not cease to be the talk of Petersburg. By degrees people wondered if there had not been more to the affair than had appeared at the time.<sup>9</sup>

Almost the only witness who wrote down his observation truthfully was a certain John Cook, a physician who visited Petersburg much later and examined Mary's head preserved in a jar of alcohol at the exhibits of the new Academy. Dr. Cook also heard the tale of the execution as it was given after sixteen years.

"Here I saw the head of the unfortunate Miss Hamilton, who lost it for having murdered her child, unlawfully begotten; and this is the only murder of that kind I ever heard of in Russia. This lady was maid of honor to the Empress Catherine. It is said Peter went and saw her executed. He wept much, but could not prevail with himself to pardon her, for fear, as is said, that God would charge him with the innocent blood she had shed. He caused her head to be cupped, and injected. The forehead is almost complete; the face is the beautifullest my eyes ever beheld; the *dura mater* and brain are all preserved in their natural situation. This is kept in spirits, in a large chrystal vessel."

Another link with the past had broken when Romodanovsky died before Alexis. In these years Peter himself seemed to be in a fever of anxiety to get things done, as if he realized that he had not many more years of life. Still he refused to occupy a palace like Menshikov's—keeping to his cabin where he could watch the ships anchored in the river. Although he wore fine linen and a silk vest, he still liked to slip into his peasant's kaftan.

No other Russians replaced Romodanovsky and Sheremet'ev. A Negro page brought by Tolstoy from Constantinople often amused Peter. His name was Abraham Hannibal, and he had learned Dutch readily. But he did not remain to serve in the tsar's cabin, being sent to France to learn military ways and the language of that country. The great-grandson of Abraham Hannibal, the poet Pushkin, was to be, long afterward, one of the most eloquent voices of the new Russia.

Yet apparently Peter paid no attention to one of the most eloquent voices of his own day, to Ivan Pososhkov, who had been born a peasant and had taught himself. Like Krijanich, this peasant-writer stormed at the inertia of Muscovite minds, calling upon fire to burn out the weeds of ignorance, and calling upon the people to understand the words of their tsar, "for they make untrue his sayings." Like the strange Serb, Pososhkov believed that enlightenment could come by ukaz from the tsar. But he had no faith in the foreigners who

flooded the land. Nor did Pososhkov place hope in the Petersburg centralization.

"The tsar draws wealth," he wrote, "into his treasury, but bestows it not upon the people of the land." And again, "What the tsar pulls into one place with the strength of ten men, will be pulled back again by a million."

Peter hardened himself to opposition in those years. Before then in Moscow he had allowed Old Believers to carry on their trades without penalty except the payment of a double tax. Now in Petersburg, where Old Believers looked on the building of the new city as the work of Antichrist, he struck at their sect, giving them the alternative of rejoining the Orthodox Church or suffering their beards and noses to be shorn, and to serve as rowers in the fleet of galleys.

### *The Peace and the Great Flood*

At last the great fleet of Petersburg was putting to sea. Every summer it emerged from the Gulf of Finland, to cruise the Baltic and blockade the Swedish coast. More than that, it raided the coast near Stockholm, the galleys ferrying over part of the army, amphibian fashion, to devastate the countryside.<sup>10</sup> As to that devastation, the Englishman's journal relates, "The Tsar's commands were positive, and performed with reluctance by the Commander-in-Chief."

The pressure of the offshore blockade bore heavily on the wearied Swedes. The great force of fighting ships, escorting the ubiquitous flotilla of galleys, threatened Stockholm itself. At one time Apraksin had eight hundred galleys and twenty-seven thousand soldiers under his command. It was a strange new navy, wherein soldiers manned the frigates—the Englishman says that the crews of the larger vessels had no more than thirty to forty experienced seamen each—and foreign navigators conned the vessels through the treacherous shallow waters, often blanketed in mist or filled with drifting ice. It was driven to its task by Peter's will.

The journal gives evidence of constant mishaps to the vessels, and of Peter's inflexible determination. "The *London* and *Portsmouth* both running on a sandbank . . . the captains

consulted and did all in their power to get the ships off; but the weather proving bad and all their boats being lost, they resolved to cut away their masts; in performance thereof the captain of the *Portsmouth* was killed, and the ships soon after bilged. . . .

"The Tsar, resolving to keep [up] the number of his ships of the line, ordered the *Poltava* to be rebuilt. . . .

"The Tsar himself in his cups frequented toasted 'A health to all brave officers who will never design to leave me, especially during the war. . . .

"The *Katharine*, *Moscow* and *Ingermanland*, though built of oak timbers were observed to be much destroyed, partly by lying in fresh water, partly . . . by the hard frost in the winter. . . . The Tsar ordered holes to be cut two foot above the water, afore and abaft, to give the air a free passage. . . ."

(While the fleet scoured the eastern Baltic, taking prizes, and watching constantly for the appearance of the English fleet to join with the Swedes, the galleys kept on with their raids of demolition.)

"Several more ships this year were condemned as unfit for service; and the latter end of this summer the fortifications of Kronsloot [Kronstadt] were finished. . . .

"The ship *Lesnoy*, Rear-Admiral Gordon and Captain Battling commanders, built by the Tsar himself and drawing 22 feet water, as she was towing out of the haven where is at most but 24 feet, came upon the fluke of an anchor that ran through her bottom and she bilged and sank. This misfortune much chagrined the Tsar; however, at last leaving directions with Prince Menshikov to use all possible efforts to weigh her up, he sailed with the fleet."

Peter had been prepared for peace. In his old dressing gown, he had harangued his two envoys in the small hours of the night before their departure for the final conference at Ny-stad at the end of the summer of 1721. These two were the best of his diplomats, Ostermann and James Bruce.

But when the courier from Viborg brought him the news, he behaved like Bombardier Peter. One word leaped out of the writing at him. Riga.

They had got him Riga, the ancient stronghold of the Baltic! True, most of Finland was handed back to the Swedes, with an indemnity of two million thalers. Yet he had Viborg, Narva, Revel, Pernau, and *Riga*.<sup>11</sup> Petersburg lay secure within the new coastlands of Esthonia and Livonia. His window to the west had opened wide. Because of his fleet, he ruled the Baltic.

The English ships that had lurked beyond the horizon threatened him no longer, because England had approved the peace, on the Swedish side, as Poland had for Russia.

That day Peter jumped into the handiest craft, an open galley, and had himself rowed up the Neva in his worn admiral's uniform with only the star of St. Andrew on it. Springing ashore at the Troitsko landing, he began to shout, "Peace—peace!"

While he hurried to pray in the cathedral, he had a platform built hastily outside the doors. Climbing over kegs of beer and wine, he stood on the platform and danced, saying whatever came into his head. "Apprentices have only seven years to serve—I have served twenty-one. With how much study, and how many blows of the rod!"

It was his personal victory over the sea and over the western powers who had stood in his way. Yet the victory had been gained in reality by the heroic endurance of his people.

In a thankful mood his new Senate, a kind of nine-man board of control, convened, and bestowed honors upon him with all formality (first consulting him as to the wording). For years he had signed documents, "We, Peter the First, Tsar and Autocrat of All the Russias." Foreign courts had fallen into the way of speaking of His Tsarian Majesty. Now the Senate hailed him as Peter the Great and Father of the Fatherland.

There was in all minds a searching back to the past, a memory of times when western monarchs had mocked at or slighted the title of tsar. These diplomats of Europe had spoken of the "Muscovite tsar" almost in contempt. Yet Moscow had, in its way, replaced Constantinople in the Christian world as the imperial city of the east. Constantinople had be-

come the city of the Turks, the splendor of its Byzantine days only a memory. Why was not the tsar, the successor to those Byzantine emperors, the actual Emperor of the East?

Peter shook his head. "It smells musty."

So the new title was pronounced as Emperor (*Imperator*) of All the Russias.

In the last years when he had had spells of sickness, Catherine's attitude had changed. He had felt that, without understanding it.

There was no outward change. At dances she would take his hand as before and pirouette gracefully with him, and with no one else. In her letters she had grown more affectionate, calling him Little Father, and even jesting. Yes, she had addressed him once as the Knight of the Compass and Anchor.

When he talked about a fine residence for her, like the Château of Marly, with a garden like the Trianon, she had made no objection. The garden should have statues set around, like Menshikov's. It should be called Ekaterinhof.

She nodded, at that. "Little Alexashka is called Highness," she reminded him, "and Serene Count."

There was no harm in that—for the indispensable viceroy to be honored. Moreover Menshikov had the shining personality, like a drawn sword, to which honor is given readily. He numbered the horses in his stables by the thousands.

Peter himself had turned over to state use the vast stables of Moscow days, along with the kitchens and cooks maintained by his father Alexis for the entire court and the upstairs poor.

The terem had been abolished, too, with its servitude of women. Peter had tried to change the ancient marriage custom, by which the fathers decided betrothals for the children. Yet it was not easy to make women obey an ukaz. More than the men, they held to their retirement. Moreover if they dressed in the new fashion and came out into the streets they flocked together, chattering like hens. They had no place to show themselves, like the halls of the old homes where they offered glasses of spirits to guests.

In the summer of 1718, in the month of Alexis' death, he

had issued an ukaz that social meetings should be held in Petersburg regularly between the hours of four and seven—assemblies, he called them, after the Paris word. At first Devier, the chief of police, had issued the invitations, and the guests had not come too willingly. Beer and tobacco had been set out on the tables. Catherine had started the dancing. . . .

Since then she had ceased using the words “Your Majesty.” That is, she had taken to saying “Little Father.” Even when she would come quietly to where he was drinking with his fledglings, she would say, “Time to come home, Little Father.” The Scottish doctor had insisted that he drink only two glasses at a sitting, and abstain from brandy and vudka. Peter drank fewer glasses but they were still the brandy that he relished.

Then there was the matter of money put away. Catherine had never before taken gifts from visitors who had business to talk over with her; now she accepted the presents and money, putting them away. Part of her funds she sent to bankers in Amsterdam. Peter had been informed of that, and thought no ill of it. A prudent housewife would put kopeks into the jar by the clock.

When they talked about the succession to the throne, he found that little Katyushka had new questions to ask. Did not Peter need to name his successor? Yet who *could* succeed him? The surviving son of Alexis, who had been christened Peter, was only an infant. The two daughters of Catherine were tall girls. No woman had been enthroned in Muscovite days; even Sophia had not held the title. But who remained to carry on Peter’s work except those nearest him, Little Alexashka, Catherine, and Elizabeth and Anne?

Peter felt a weariness and a craving for what was near him. Even at night or on a journey he could not endure to be alone. When he felt drowsy, he called for a servant and stretched himself out with his head on the man’s body. Sometimes he walked out to sleep in a small boat. The motion of the water quieted him. If he found himself in a lofty bedroom, he felt uneasy until they brought a sail or tapestry, and rigged it over the bed to bring the roof close to him.

His cabin of hewn logs and shingles dripped with dampness,



yet he would not give it up. Instead, he had heavier walls built around it, like a stone shell.

At times when he lay on his cot bed, his eyes half closed, his flesh, puffed up, aching with the pain of frayed nerves, he fancied that this cabin was his one home. It protected him. Outside it stood the formless edifice of an empire. By his commands—and nothing in the empire could be effected now without such a command from the tsar—a door or window appeared in the structure, or a wall was opened; but what it might become as a whole he could not know. . . . Men-shikov's palace had stately gate towers. You entered it, passed through the formal green garden, and climbed the steps to the anteroom. You found everything finished, waiting, ready to hand. . . .

Driven by his restlessness, because movement stifled pain, Peter would stalk along the canals to stride through the foundations of the German wire factory, no longer carrying his notebook. Secretaries and servitors followed him, running to keep up, lugging their plans and account books, waiting for him to speak. When diplomats besieged him, he would often walk away from them or set them to working with their hands . . . he would allow no card playing or European games at his assemblies . . . when the women came to the assembly which had been proclaimed to be mourning for the Regent of France, they wore no mourning; they wore their colored gowns, imitated from the European . . . when he ordered them to go home and change, they said they had no other dresses . . . it had been easier after Catherine started the beer drinking and dancing . . . that Polish woman who smiled secretively, he found it easier to talk to her when he worked with a plane and saw . . . she would not lie down with him . . .

Weber, the envoy from Hanover, no friend to Peter, wrote of a gathering of diplomats at Peterhof. "The Tsarina gave each of us a glass of brandy. Some of us went to sleep after dinner in the garden. About four o'clock we were wakened, and the Tsar ordered hatchets given us. Then he led us out to the wood and paced off a space about a hundred steps in width where, by the river, we were told to cut down the trees. The

Tsar himself set to work first and although we were not accustomed to woodcutting—there were seven of us, in all—we managed to finish our stint in about three hours. Only one minister was harmed by the fall of a tree. By that time the fumes of drink had gone out of our heads.

“Thanking us for our trouble, the Tsar entertained us well that evening. At night, before we had slept more than an hour and a half, we were wakened by a favorite of the Tsar and conducted, willy-nilly, into the chamber of a prince of Circassia who was in bed with his wife. There we had to remain, drinking brandy, until four o’clock in the morning. At eight they called us to breakfast which was brandy again instead of the tea or coffee we expected. After which we were led out to take the air on horseback—the horses being eight sad looking nags led up by a peasant. Each of us mounted one, and we were made to pass in a sorry kind of procession before the window where Their Majesties looked out at us.”

The flood came with a west wind. Before then it had rained steadily for days. Above the Neva the new canalway had turned into a muddy lake.

The west wind rose to a gale, thrusting at the surging Baltic, and forcing the water of the narrowing gulf on, into the mouth of the river Neva. There the rising water of the sea met the flood of the rain-soaked land.

Beneath the waters the tracery of sandbanks vanished in boiling sand. The flood became a cataract tormented by the blast of the wind. It thrust into the streets of Petersburg. It loosened the pilings under the buildings, and the houses creaked like ships in a storm. It lapped up the soil of the new gardens and filled the cells of the Peter and Paul Fortress.

Sailing craft torn from their moorings and tree trunks gliding down the river battered against the upper stories of houses. Skeletons of new vessels staggered out of the shipways and were sucked down by the current.

By the next day the flood had risen over the ground floors of the dwellings. When night came pinpoints of light showed like glowflies over the surface of the water as the people got into boats to leave Peter’s city.

Pulling at the oars of galleys, Old Believers without their noses nodded their heads as they watched the lights diminish. They rowed their galleys where the Prospekt had been, turning through the treetops toward the higher ground. There, above flood level, rose the stone walls of the monastery of Alexander Nevsky.

It seemed clear to the Old Believers that the sea had come into the land to destroy the city of Antichrist. In proof of that, had not the waters spared the consecrated soil of the monastery?

After the great flood, Peter Alexeivich made his way on foot through the mud and the broken walls, gazing curiously at the destruction, and directing how the work of repair was to begin.

### *The Silent Migration*

The drift of the populace had been going on for some time but without evidencing itself. After Poltava a census of "hearths" or dwellings had shown a strange and unexpected shrinkage since the beginning of the war. Instead of increasing in a decade, the number of householders had shrunk.

Evidently the peasantry and small owners as well as serfs were departing from the state-controlled area, to the frontier provinces beyond the reach of census takers. At the same time desertions from the armed forces had increased. After the Pruth campaign, the War Office records showed forty thousand conscripts vanished, and some thirty thousand deserters from the ranks. Because of these desertions the yearly draft had to be stepped up, sometimes to one man in five in a village. Pososhkov, in his own way, describes the shirkers who "act idiotic before the inspectors, to be certified as mad, and then sneak home to their villages to roar like lions."

By the end of the war, more than three hundred and fifty thousand families had vanished from the tax records.

That in itself caused a new hardship. If the hearths to be taxed had grown less, those that remained must be taxed more, increasingly, as the cost of the war mounted, especially the cost of building, equipping, and manning the new navy. There

was also the new General Staff to be paid for. By the time of the peace of Nystad the expense of maintaining the army, navy, and staff with all that pertained to them had grown unaccountably to nearly six million gold rubles.

This was more than one half the yearly revenue of the new empire.

In proportion as the taxation increased, the flight of householders mounted also. At the peace, the father of a family had four rubles to pay in each year. That of course was due in great measure to the debasing of the currency. Even up at Kronstadt, the anonymous Englishman noticed that while the ruble had been worth some ten English shillings before the war, it was now worth no more than five.

By escaping from the war area a Russian moujik could avoid payment of this unbelievable tax. Down past the Kharkov guard line lay the fertile Ukrainian earth and freedom from the tax collectors. Beyond the Urals custom post lay the new territory of the Baraba steppe.

Increasingly during the ten years since the Pruth campaign, the drift of population had tended south and east. It was more a flight by families than by mirs. After the roads dried out, or on the winter "snow road," a family could pack its utensils into the cart or sledge, hitch up the horse, tie the cow behind, and make its way slowly south, helping to gather in crops or begging from Christian folk. God had given plenty of fruit and grain in the south. And out in the wild lands a new cabin could be put together in a month, while the soil was turned over for seeding.

Since the armies had been sent, mostly, up to the far Baltic among the Finns and Livonians—and even into the unknown "western lands," not to mention the sea itself—few troops manned the posts in the south and east.

In this migration, however, the families made their way past the old Volga region. The assessors and guards had become too numerous there. By Peter's year of decision, 1718, the records show that in Archangel seven persons had vanished out of every hundred, in Kazan (where timber cutting and hide gathering as well as collection of cattle for the military went on) ten out of every hundred.

Peter himself had changed the old taxation on land to a "soul tax" (poll tax), to apply it more closely to individuals; but that had not lessened the tax itself. The immediate effect of changing the tax from the land to the individual was that more individuals began to desert their land. For a while he had thought of enlisting the services of a miraculous Scottish financier, John Law by name, who had set up a *bank* in France to meet the debts of Louis XIV. But later reports from Paris revealed that John Law's bank no longer wrought miracles.

After the peace, some of the troops were disbanded, but the structure of the army remained as large as before. As to the fleet, the Englishman observed that the tsar was not willing to diminish it. One vessel building in Holland was sold, and some of the poorer craft turned into merchantmen, while the others were careened for repairs or sent out on sea maneuvers. Work on the canals and Petersburg continued unabated, in spite of obstacles and resentment of the labor armies—"the main impediments [were the] absence of money," the Englishman relates, "and aversion of the Russian people to works of this nature, proceeding from an universal distaste and dissatisfaction in the body of the Russian nation. The Russ give them [voice their dissatisfaction] in a proverb: "God is far above us—and the Tsar far from us."

It was an old proverb, spoken long before in the troubled eastern provinces.

The popular unrest was aggravated by the losses during the unending war. Casualties in battle did not run excessively high—there had been no major battle since Poltava and the Pruth—but deaths from disease in the makeshift training camps and army cantonments rose beyond any control (although Peter had tried to supply the troops with medicine and surgeons). One Swedish officer, a prisoner since Poltava, Philip Johan, Baron of Strahlenberg, estimates the losses in Peter's wars as more than three hundred thousand men, and the losses in the Petersburg labor as one hundred thousand. (These are no more than conjectures by an intelligent observer, critical of Russian methods.)

The Englishman speaks of the populace at this time as "in-

credibly dispirited." Yet he finds the ignorant masses "tenacious" on such points as keeping up the old religious fasts, "amounting in the whole to fifteen weeks besides every Wednesday and Friday throughout the year." (During the fasts the Orthodox Russian would eat little except fruit and mushrooms, and could not perform heavy manual labor; Peter tried to have construction work carried on during the fasts.)

"When great numbers of sick have been landed from aboard the Russian fleet, especially in these fasting seasons, the Tsar has ordered provisions of fresh meat issued and set a guard to prevent bringing in other sustenance. Many have actually perished rather than violate their ill-informed consciences in eating forbidden foods. Although the Tsar, in his private opinion, highly condemns this custom, yet perceiving the strong attachment of the populace [to it] he forbears to abolish it by public edict; but underhand endeavors to overthrow [it] by turning it into ridicule. Herein is he seconded by many of the modern Russ both in the army and the navy, that have been abroad in the world. Yet so little progress is made that scarce one in a hundred amongst the under-officers and seamen will, unless by pure compulsion, break this established notion."

This is the time when the Cossack colonel complained bitterly to the new Senate at Petersburg that his men, ordered to labor on the northern canals, were dying off. Serfs ordered into the new munitions—and cloth and leather—factories, run at that time by Peter's favorites, mutinied and were fired on by the military guards. There were riots in the fisheries because the monopoly of salt prevented the fishermen from getting enough salt to preserve the fish.

An order went out to mark all military conscripts by tattooing. Frightened by this branding, recruits fled the camps in droves.

Like heat lightning, the silent revolt flickered along the horizon, never breaking into a storm but gathering intensity. It appears along old frontiers, distant from Petersburg.

In Moscow a government printer fixes rebellious posters to the street corners. He flees into Siberia, is tracked down, brought back and burned. In Kazan a monk preaches revolt. He is beheaded. Beyond the Volga the Cheremiss tribes rise

and are crushed by an army column. During the year of the execution of Alexis brigandage increases along the post roads, until traffic is often held up, or forced to proceed under armed guard.

By his determination to make Petersburg on the Baltic the head of the continental empire the tsar is intensifying the struggle with his own people. More than that, he is opening up a new cleavage. By turning to the education of the westerners, he is divorcing his minority, in Petersburg, from the folk of continental Eurasia.

The voiceless trek of the Slavs sets in more strongly the other way. In the popular fancy the area of Moscow-Petersburg has become one of war and compulsion; in the east, beyond the Urals, peace is to be had. And Pososhkov writes that while ten move one way, a million pull the other. Pososhkov himself is imprisoned.

### *The Purge of the Favorites*

The nobility and the upper-class merchants remained loyal on the whole—perhaps not so much to Peter as to the tsardom. They complained bitterly of the hardships at Petersburg, where meat and grain had to be carted in at heavy cost, and a two-room dwelling with cracked walls cost four times as much as a comfortable mansion in Moscow. Those who did not make the move had to send their petitions up to the new Senate and wait interminably for a response. The one road to Petersburg was so jammed with humans going both ways that the post service broke down and could not supply enough horses. Sometimes families sat for a week in the station sheds, among piles of red sandstone, oak timber, sacks of grain en route to the new city. Often when they left the gates of Moscow the families wept as if going into exile.

But the Dolgorukys, the Galitzins and Kuragins served the tsar as their ancestors had done, and without them Peter could not have ruled. The old boyars' council had become the new Senate, but it tried to carry out much the same duties as before.<sup>12</sup>

The consummate Shafirov advised about foreign affairs, yet

a Russian of the old type, Gabriel, headed the bureau, now the College of Foreign Affairs. (And by now Shafirov, whose wealth vied with that of Menshikov himself, had married his



*Drawn by N. Witzén about 1690—Le Bruyn*

Boyar on the road: ferry across the river Oka near Moscow

five daughters into the Dolgoruky, Garagan, Golovin, Khovansky, and Saltikov families.)

The foreign naval officers at Kronstadt functioned under the persuasive personality of Apraksin, who prided himself on his splendid uniforms, and who had joined the Tolstoy-Shafirov factory cabal that was reaping fortunes out of the war supplies.

Even the eight new governors general of the eight provinces, who had been appointed to set up local administration to replace the old remote control of the Moscow bureaus, had come to conduct themselves like the vovodes of the previous generation. "They were given to farm the regions," Stralen-



berg relates, "in return for paying an appointed revenue to the treasury."

Stralenberg points out shrewdly that at this point the provincial governors took their cue from the ring of favorites around Peter. They were obliged in any case to meet the exactions of that ring. If they sent in the full amount of a year's tax much of it might disappear before reaching the Treasury. In consequence, revenues from the more distant regions like Kazan and Astrakhan failed to arrive in full.

Informers, of course, brought Peter some particulars of all this. But he disliked to bother his head about finances. And at first the secret agents brought in tidings because they could claim part of the money extracted from their victims. Then the system was changed, so that a man informing against another had to prove his case—"by word and deed"—or suffer the penalty that would have been inflicted on the other. That checked the flood of rumors, without checking the bribes by which the informers could be set by one official upon another.

Yaghuzinsky, the headstrong ex-bootblack, now chief executioner, gave particulars of gigantic thefts to his master. The pseudo fools told Peter tales about favorites they hated. It was no action of Peter's part, however, but the mutual accusations of the cabals that brought about the purge. Peter stormed at Menshikov, about the systematic looting in Poland, where entire districts had been stripped by the favorites' wagon trains.

That was past and done with. "A trifle." Menshikov shrugged.

"It is not a trifle," Peter retorted, "that those people will bear us everlasting ill-will. Besides, you have gone against my ukazi."

He had heard of the draining of money at Petersburg, and of the dealings in grain by which Menshikov and others sold for their own account corn bought with government funds. For a while the onlookers expected Menshikov to be sent to execution. His assistant was knouted. Other favorites died. Some paid Catherine to protect them.

Menshikov himself took to his bed in real or pretended sickness. And Peter's anger subsided, to outward appearance. Perhaps he had discovered the great sums hidden away by Cath-

erine. Probably he was unable, by that time, to punish those close to him. Apraksin, chastened, resumed his duties; Tolstoy served as before, inscrutably.

Rumor has it that during the fury of the tsar, Yaghuzinsky told him, "If Your Majesty executes every thieving soul, you will have no subjects left." And gossip relates that Peter, taking Tolstoy's head between his hands, said, "O head, if I had known how clever you were, you would not be here on your shoulders now." If not true, the rumors are typical of the men and the time.

During those years of stress before the peace, something had changed in Peter's mind. He did not speak of it. After the peace of Nystad in September 1721, there was every apparent need for him to stay in Petersburg, to bring some order into his administration.

Instead he turned to the east, as Ivan the Terrible had done in his last years.

Without a pause, he set his face away from Petersburg and the Baltic, journeying that winter to Moscow, ordering galleys to be portaged across the rivers to the south, gun carriages to be prepared at Kazan, and new shipping built on the Volga. Although grain lacked in the north, he had depots filled with grain down the Volga.

He was bound for the Caspian, to lead in person, with Catherine, Apraksin, and Tolstoy, an invasion of Asia.

## V

# THE TURNING TO THE EAST

### *Little Demidov and the Far Mountains*

**I**N ALL his days, from the Sloboda to the building of Catherine's palace, Peter Alexeivich had shown an active interest only in the west and the things of the west. Now, as if at a signal, he turned to the hinterland behind him. Why he did so remains a riddle, to be solved if we are able to do so.

Certainly of all his undertakings, this was most peculiarly his own. No one advised him to do it, and he had the most valid reasons not to do it. Some influence other than reasoning drew him to explore Asia, when he must have felt his health to be failing.

Look back, then, for a moment for the traces of that influence.

He craved to reach the outer seas. Long since, at Archangel, he had thought of exploring the Frozen Sea. Whitworth noticed how he reacted to talk of China and the Ice Sea, and the greater one known vaguely as the Eastern Ocean Sea reaching to a new world. He took pains to build and maintain a church in Peking, the chief city of China—even writing a memorandum about it to Andreas Vinius during his disappointment at Vienna.

Leibnitz wrote often enough about surveying Siberia, and establishing the longitude of far places by scientific observation. Peter had seen a Japanese from the farthest islands, and greeted scholars and embassies from Khiva and Bokhara, who sought to have him come to the eastern lands. To all this he gave no answer.

When he held a costume ball, Falstaff fashion, with music of

Asia, watched by Finns in native dress, Poles played their violins and Kalmuks their balalaikas. The boyar dressed as a Catholic bishop was fitted with a pair of Samoyed staghorns. Raskolnik settlers, whale fishers, Armenian traders, and Lapp and Tungusi hunters rounded out the costumes of the empire. Peter came as a sailor with a drum.

He watched good Dr. Erskine lovingly sort out herbs on pieces of clean paper that had been fetched from Siberia to the new hospital. From the far places, too, came silver—from Nerchinsk—vitally needed in the war, when the China caravans brought in silk and gold, and fabrics finer than Peter had seen before.

Then there was Little Demidov, who wrenched priceless iron out of the Ural mines. Demidov had made guns once; he could not be bribed, and like Peter, he still took his ease in a peasant's kaftan. Little Demidov had a fortune, like the grandes of Petersburg, but he had earned every kopek. Over his pipe he told Peter of the cattle on the Baraba Steppe, and of rivers that could be linked together to form a waterway across the continent.

Demidov knew the Kalmuk khans who had aided Peter at need as much as the shipments of silver and iron. Never had Peter set out for Demidov's land, but he had not forgotten it.

After that, in his spells of quiet, he sent out explorers, first to Isfahan where Moscow's merchants had a trade base—Peter still loaded ships with his own goods, to trade in the west. An ambassador was sent as the first explorer—Voluinsky, who, with Shafirov, had bought the release of the army at the Pruth—and Peter told him to ascertain "what are the great rivers discharging into the Caspian; to what point can they be navigated, up. Find out if some one river does not flow from India into this sea. In what ports are the ships of war on the Caspian? What mountains and what difficult passes divide the provinces of the Caspian shore from the rest of Persia?"

Once he said, "It is my hope to go from Persia to India."

The ambassador-explorer-special-agent departed, to be gone a long time. Voluinsky had a mission like Spathary's. Peter sent another special envoy to Peking, Lev Ismailov, warning him to bow politely to the great Manchu emperor, and not to

put forward Peter's titles, which always offended the Chinese. Lev Ismailov came back with his report, that the Manchu cared little for trade, and said the Russian tsar seemed occupied always with war and building ships.

Then there was the troublesome matter of Prince Gagarin, whom Peter had liked and had appointed governor of Siberia, in Tobolsk—to inject some sort of order into the huge eastern hinterland. When an informer brought word from Tobolsk that Gagarin was setting himself up as an autocrat, and levying tribute on the other towns, Peter paid no heed. And the chest of documents the informer brought back, carefully, was burned mysteriously in the Senate.

Gagarin's case, however, could not be forgotten. It came up again in the troublesome year of the brigands and the Cheremiss.

### *Testimony of Stralenberg*

The Swedish prisoner, Johan, Baron of Stralenberg, had come to know of Gagarin more intimately than Peter. He gives this explanation of what happened: "Prince Gagarin had planned since 1715 to establish his own kingdom upon any revolution breaking out in Moscow. Being viceroy of this immense province, he had gathered in large amounts of money. By means of that he was able to buy the friendship of certain Senators, and thereby to have freedom to act more and more independently in his province. He took care to appoint his own kinsmen and friends to civilian and military offices, to make certain that no one opposed the increased taxes which he levied at will.

"When people complained of the new exactions, he assumed a compassionate air, protesting that the orders of the Tsar were most severe and could not be altered. . . . On the other hand he had the *finesse* to hand out money to the population, to indemnify them for these heavy exactions of the Tsar.

"Not content with the imposts by which he drained his province, he took contributions from the neighboring Perm, Viatka and Pechora—not forgetting to offer his own contributions to the neighboring towns.

"He hinted often at changes about to be made in religion by the government, while he himself put on partial Russian clothing [European dress being required by law for officials] and assisted daily at the church services, keeping all the fasts. At church he spoke familiarly even with peasants, and gave them hope of better times to come. He also turned over confiscated goods to Swedish prisoners and helped to support them in their captivity.

"Gagarin had taken all precautions to intercept any reports of his conduct, either spoken or written. To do this he posted guards on the roads going to Russia, except the pass of Verk-huturie where he had stationed one of his closest relatives, who refused to allow anyone to go through without a passport signed by Gagarin himself, and intercepted all letters written to persons connected with the Court. Those who deplored his conduct Gagarin sent to distant posts where no further news was had of them.

"Having made all his dispositions and arranging perfectly to recruit his friends and silence his enemies, the Governor began to organise the armed forces of the Siberian countryside. To aid in this he granted to a number of young gentry the rank of boyars' sons—a kind of noble-born who drew no pay but served at their own expense.

"The one Dragoon regiment in the province he divided into two and recruited to new strength, pretending that specific orders from the Tsar required it. As for infantry, he made no haste in assembling it, being confident of getting recruits enough and hoping to find capable officers among the Swedish prisoners of war. The Siberian metal works supplied him with cannon enough, and shot. His great difficulty was to get muskets and powder which he could not secure [from the Moscow munitions plants] without the authorisation of the Senate. He had no plausible reason for petitioning for it, the State being then at peace with all its neighbors on the Siberian side.

"Finally Gagarin thought out a way to get his munitions, without arousing the suspicions of the Court. To do this, he sent agents into Bokhara (a province of Great Tartary) where several rivers yielded a small quantity of gold sand. They had orders to buy as much of this loose gold as possible. After se-

curing about a dozen *livres* worth of it, Gagarin journeyed to Petersburg, and confided his discovery to the Tsar at Petersburg mysteriously. Gagarin led him to believe that the gold deposits were not very far from his own Government [from Tobolsk] and that it would be an easy matter to reach them, but the Kalmuks would allow no one to carry off this sand. To do so it would be necessary to occupy the area and control it. If His Majesty [Gagarin argued] would allow him arms for about ten thousand men and permit him to take back with him apparatus and technicians for manufacturing powder—for which raw materials could be found in Siberia—he would answer for the success of the undertaking.

“The Tsar relished these proposals very much, and after giving him every indication of goodwill, promised to supply him with what he requested. However, not daring to trust this old fox altogether [Peter had had one damaging report about Gagarin] the Tsar appointed a Colonel Bucholtz to furnish the supplies from the government to Gagarin, for the hypothetical expedition against the Kalmuks, and to search for the gold sand. This upset Gagarin badly, although he did not dare disclose it, because he could not prevent Bucholtz from setting out from Tobolsk at the head of three thousand men to journey along the river Irtish.”

Gagarin's conspiracy was dangerous.<sup>1</sup> In Tobolsk he held with him the Metropolitan of Siberia, who might have roused the Old Believers to rebellion; he was intercepting the caravans from China. (A rumor ran, later on, that he had managed to get from the Chinese the “finest ruby in the world” which he had sent as a gift to Catherine. There is no evidence of that, but he seems to have sent gifts to Menshikov.) The popular rising had been skillfully planned. Evidently he had been at work in Perm, the area between the Urals (with the all-important mines) and Kazan, a breeding center of revolt. This happened to be also the country of the Cheremiss. Moreover portions of the populations uprooted from the Baltic had been transported thither in the last few years. Whitworth remarks, speaking of the Russian authorities, “Several towns on the Volga are the fruits of their former expeditions in Poland and

Lithuania; and they have at present (1710-11) drained above one third of the inhabitants from Ingria and Livonia and settled whole villages of them towards Veroneth."

These Volga River lands had revolted ten years before, on the eve of Poltava (the Bashkir prairies to Astrakhan). Small armed forces could hold the passes of the Urals. And the Volga seemed to be ready for one of its periodic reactions against the central government.

Siberia itself knew Peter only as a name to be prayed for in church. The only government in Siberia was the individual will of the military commanders—and secretaries—scattered among the wooden forts. The only action Peter himself had taken up to now to improve conditions in Siberia had been to appoint Gagarin, the former governor of Nerchinsk, its governor-general.

Evidently Gagarin intended to move slowly toward secession, hoping for "some mutiny in Moscow" or for the death of Peter. At least he made no attempt to interfere with Bucholtz, who could not be bought or won over.

Certainly he sent Bucholtz's column on a wild-geese chase after the gold. Gagarin's samples had been taken from the Samarkand mountains far to the southwest; Bucholtz journeyed up the Irtysh, far to the southeast, past the outlying settlements and the Baraba lake almost within sight of the Altai, where deposits of copper had just been found. He also came into Kalmuk territory, and plundered some hilltop towns deserted at his approach by the tribesmen.<sup>2</sup>

At the headwaters of the Irtysh Bucholtz was attacked by these eastern Kalmuks. His column, badly mangled, retreated to Tobolsk.

The failure of the expedition angered Peter; he sent a senator, Yakov Dolgoruky, to investigate the Gagarin situation, then got from informers and traders fresh evidence about the plot, the interference with the China caravans, and Gagarin's link-up with Menshikov, Apraksin, and Yakov Dolgoruky himself. A detachment of officers of the Preobrazhensky Guards under a Major Likarov was hurried to Tobolsk, where they found that Gagarin had burned his records.

He was brought back to Petersburg—1717—subjected to



knouting and "severe" torture, perhaps seven times, and his body hung up in the square of the Senate.

Peter was now roused to pay closer attention to the great hinterland from which he had been drawing resources. Gagarin's conspiracy had died stillborn, but revolt simmered along the Volga. The Cheremiss tribes were suppressed but the much more dangerous western Kalmuks took to arms along the southern steppe, and the half-dug line of the canal connecting the Don and the Volga had to be manned against them. Peter called this the Tsaritsyn Line.<sup>3</sup> This same year (that of the death of Alexis, who, however, had no participation in the eastern unrest) Peter struck savagely at the Old Believer sects which he had not disturbed until then. Across the ukaz commanding them to join the Orthodox Church he wrote one of his curt notes: "If possible, try to find them in some clear offense, other than mere dissent."

The Kalmuk rising wiped out another of Peter's exploratory columns entire. He had sent it with one of his favorites, Prince Bekhovich Cherkasky, a Georgian, in command to examine the shores of the inland seas, the Aral and Caspian, and to build forts at strategic river mouths. Recalling the old friendship with the dour khans of Khiva, Peter instructed Cherkasky to treat with them and to search for the missing gold.

Evidently, to round out the report of the Persian mission, he wanted a rough survey of the river routes leading from the inland seas toward India, or at least farther into Asia.

At the same time he sent to Khiva, to request that Russian traders be guided along the best route to India.

The Georgian took Cossacks with him, and built forts where he found ruins and old river beds on the north shore of the Caspian. But the 1717 reaction of the Kalmuk, Tatars, and Turkomans swept over his half-finished posts and cut him off. For months Russian fugitives were hunted down in the deserts, and some of their skins nailed to the gates of Khiva. Search for survivors was made at the southern end of the Urals, without success, and it became a proverb along the dry steppe, "as lost as Bekhovich."

On this line of the steppe the tribes of Asia struck another blow that year. The Kirghiz who had kept a troubled peace

with the Baraba settlements had been negotiating with Gagarin. Peter had instructed Gagarin to bind them to Russia by a treaty. In any case after Gagarin's arrest and execution the Kirghiz joined the resistance of the Kalmuks and Khiva khans, raiding up through the Russian posts along the Urals and taking and burning the town of Novochikminsk.

Peter did not find it easy to appoint another governor general of Siberia. The post was offered to Grigori Stroganov, a descendant of the great pioneer family that had held domain in the Urals, and declined. Stroganov chose rather to stay in his Petersburg mansion and enjoy his wealth.

The news from Asia in these last years stirred Peter to action.

In the year 1722 he had under his sole command a huge fleet and one of the strongest of armies. These he did not dare disband. They had become the basis of his rule, since the early days of Azov. Other than the fleet and army, he, Emperor of All the Russias, had only the allegiance of his nobles to support him. That, and the new city still infested by the mire of the floods . . . Peter had almost drowned when the boats struggled to save people on the Nevsky Prospekt . . . when the water had come over his stone pavement, laid by the dour Swedes.

Among the books piled on the table beneath the ikon that had accompanied him in his travels, he recognized too many that had been written for him. There was the slim leather volume of Feofan Prokopovich, *The Law of the Monarch's Will*, stating all the case against his son. The journal of the Great Northern War stood up, resplendent in the gilt French binding. Beneath it somewhere lay *The Tale of the Warlike Exploits of Our Tsar*.

What was the one written by that monk, against the Lutherans? *The Tsar, the Cornerstone of the Faith*. Peter had not wanted that to be printed, so it was not among these books of his new library.

He liked better to think of the day when he had stood on the quarterdeck of the yacht with the Neptune figurehead, with the foreign admirals around him, all their cocked hats in

their hands against their hips. At Copenhagen, when he had reviewed his new fleet . . . like the time, a quarter century before, when the English line-of-battle ships drove past in rigid line, off Spithead.

Now, in his hours of quiet, he did not know what to do. There would have been plenty, a new trip to Marly and Paris, if he had gained the French alliance. He had liked the seven-year-old boy. He had written Katyushka about him.

Somewhere among his papers lay the report of the Persian mission concerning the great inland Caspian Sea. It had been neglected for years.

But Peter remembered two things in it. That river. In ancient times the Amu Darya, like another Volga, had flowed into the Caspian. The efficient Mongols had changed its course, to discharge into the Aral Sea. His people wrote that the river could easily be shifted back to its old bed and made to flow into the Caspian again, by a dam up there on the plateau. It flowed down from the mountains of the Afghans that barred the way to India. It was navigable for barks and the larger galleys.

The other thing: Persia was in chaos, a dynasty overthrown, rebels seizing the port of Shamakhy on the Caspian, and confiscating the goods of Russian merchants . . . a suitable excuse for intervention . . . they said Persia was ready for the coming of a second Alexander.

He was weary of the mists of Petersburg, where so many papers and problems lay before him. . . . He had christened the town among the new mines of the Urals Ekaterinburg, for Catherine.

When the rivers rose with the spring floods Peter started toward Asia. At Moscow he picked up the Guard regiments that he had created so long ago out of the Transfiguration and Semen'ev battalions. He gathered up other infantry and artillery, until he had the best of his army with him. And he went as his forebears had voyaged across the plain of Rus in an armada of galleys under sail and oar.

Like Tsar Batu, who had been the Mongol master of the Volga, Peter Alexeivich took with him his court of jesters,

secretaries, interpreters, and physicians. He took Catherine, from whom he could not bring himself to part, and Apraksin, who cheered him and harangued the galley crews, and Peter Tolstoy, who knew something about Asiatics, having been imprisoned within the Seven Towers of Constantinople.

When the cherry trees bloomed and the peasants plowed the saturated riverbanks, Peter had his first glimpse of the empire that, beyond Moscow, he ruled as tsar.

### *What John Bell of Antermomy Saw*

At Kazan, the Tatar city on the height where the Volga swung south, a Scotsman joined the armada. He was John Bell, a surgeon recommended by Erskine, and one of those wandering men whose tranquillity can be shaken by no untoward happening. Before then he had served on the mission to Persia; with Lev Ismailov he had made his way to the court of K'ang hsi, at Peking, and back; on that journey he had chatted with Hugo Hamilton, the general of the Swedish army, a prisoner since Poltava. Of the Scottish and Swedish captives scattered through Siberia, he said "they contributed not a little to the civilizing of those distant regions, introducing several useful arts which were almost unknown before their arrival." (This had been before Gagarin's removal.)

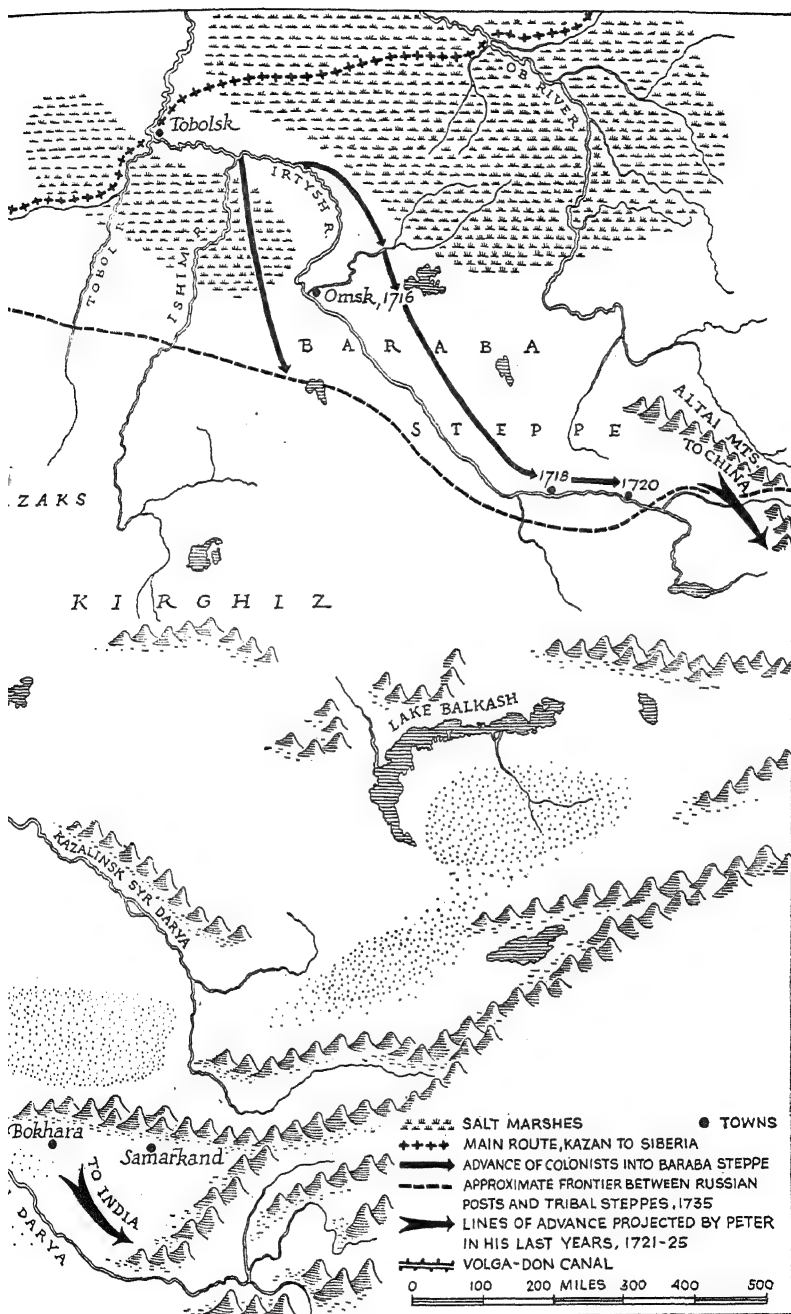
John Bell found at Kazan an Englishman who had bought for six rubles a Cheremiss wife—"a woman of very pleasant and open countenance."

By then nothing surprised John Bell, not even the sight of a court combined with an army about to travel overland in a fleet. (Stralenberg was altogether perplexed, whether "this Monarch were leading the way to a promenade or to a war." Bell, who knew Persia, believed they were to invade the country ostensibly to repel the Afghans who had descended from their mountains near India to raid Isfahan.)

At Moscow he had witnessed the formal celebration of the peace of Nystad, and the departure of the tsar for Persia combined.

"The Russians in general," John Bell observes, "had a strong aversion to shipping and maritime affairs. . . . [The





tsar] represented to his people that the peace, the rejoicings for which they were now celebrating, was obtained by means of his naval strength."

A procession of naval floats was contrived as a spectacle.

"The first of the cavalcade was a galley, finely carved and gilt, in which the rowers plied their oars as on the water. The galley was commanded by the high admiral of Russia [Apraksin]. Then came a frigate, of 16 small brass guns, with three masts completely rigged, manned by twelve or fourteen youths habited like Dutch skippers in black velvet, who trimmed the sails and performed all the maneuvers as of a ship at sea. This ship required above 40 horses to draw it. Then came most richly decorated barges, wherein sat the Empress and the ladies of the court. There were also pilot boats heaving the lead and above 30 other vessels, each filled with masqueraders in the dresses of different nations."

The festival ended, the departure took place, troops and court alike embarking in three hundred galleys at Kolomna.

"The 16th [of May 1722] in the evening, His Majesty and the Empress attended by a few ladies, went on board a magnificent galley of forty oars, with all proper accommodations, built on purpose for the voyage.

"The 17th at break of day the signal was given by firing three great guns from His Majesty's galley, for the fleet to get under sail. His Majesty's galley carried the standard of Russia, the other vessels displayed their ensigns, with drums beating and music playing, which altogether made an appearance perhaps not to be equalled in any other country. In about an hour's time we came into the river Oka, where the vessels had more room to spread."

One of the few ladies who embarked happened to be Maria Kantemir, now with child by Peter. For her alone Catherine seemed to feel acute jealousy. Maria was handsome, younger, and the daughter of a chieftain. Her child might be a boy, and Catherine no longer had a son. For years Peter had shown feeling for Maria. The year before he had forced Senate, officers, and people alike to swear loyalty to his successor, *whoever that might be*. The people had murmured, of course, in

giving their oath as it were in blank—to whatsoever human being Peter chose to name before his death. Eudoxia was still alive in her Ladoga cell, but Catherine had no fear of her, after the death of Alexis. No, Maria Kantemir was the one woman who challenged her openly, and Maria was her companion of the galley.

Their voyage swept them down the flooded Volga, where the galleys sometimes stranded among the treetops. Yet they celebrated Peter's birthday and were feted by Baron Strogonov in the old Russian manner.

"The 20th [of May] the Emperor had appointed an interview," John Bell relates, "with Ayuka Khan of the Kalmuks. The Khan for that purpose, had his tents pitched on the east bank of the Volga, not far from the river. . . . The Ayuka Khan came on horseback attended by his sons, all exceedingly well mounted. About twenty yards from the shore he alighted, and was received by a privy counselor [Tolstoy?] and an officer of the Guard. When the Emperor saw him advancing, he went on shore, saluted him, and taking him by the hand, conducted him on board the galley where he introduced him to the Empress seated under a very rich awning.

"Soon after, the [Kalmuk] Queen arrived on the shore, in a covered wheel-machine, attended by her daughter, who was, in the eyes of the Kalmuks, a complete beauty. They were richly dressed in long robes of Persian brocade with little round caps bordered with sable-fur. The Emperor went on shore to receive her.

"The Ayuka Khan is an old man about seventy years of age, yet is hearty and cheerful. And I recollect that when I was at Peking the Emperor of China made very honorable mention of him. By his long experience, he is very well acquainted with the state of affairs in the east."

Ayuka Khan—at that time nearer eighty than seventy years—was head of the Oirat or western Kalmuks who had migrated from the Chinese frontier to the Volga, where they obligated themselves to furnish ten thousand horsemen at summons to the Russian tsars, in return for an allowance of money, grain, and powder. These Kalmuks had given Peter vital aid in the Poltava campaign. Two generations later they were to



forsake the Russian steppe and make the long trek back across central Asia described romantically by De Quincey in *The Flight of a Tartar Tribe*. Peter, as usual, made a point of bringing women into the meeting.

"The Emperor intimated to the Ayuka Khan that he would be desirous of ten thousand of his troops to accompany him into Persia. The King of the Kalmuks replied that ten thousand were at the Emperor's service, but he thought one half that number would be more than sufficient to answer all his purposes; and immediately gave orders for five thousand to march directly and join the Emperor at Terki. . . . The Empress gave the Queen a gold repeating watch, set with diamonds, which seemed very much to take her fancy.

"This treaty between two mighty monarchs was begun, carried on and concluded, in less space of time than is usually employed by the plenipotentiaries of our western European monarchs in taking a dinner."

Summer heat set in when they reached Astrakhan at the Volga mouths. There Maria Kantemir, ill, was put ashore. She had a miscarriage and so gave birth to no boy. The fleet, strengthened by larger ships and escorted on the land by dragoons and Cossacks, had to feel its way against contrary winds past the bare sandy islands and reed morasses, out to the blue salt water of the Caspian.

"The Emperor accompanied the half-galleys which with the troops on board steered to the west, close under the shore. But I being on board one of the large ships kept the sea and steered a direct course for Terki. . . . The town is a frontier [post] strongly fortified, of singular use for keeping the Circassian mountaineers in order.

"Here the Emperor sent an officer to Shavkal, a prince of authority among the mountaineers and a friend to the Russians. The 27th [of July] the fleet weighed anchor and sailed south by east to the bay of Agrakhan. In the evening we anchored as near the shore as we judged convenient. The Imperial standard was set up; all the troops landed and encamped.

"The same day a Cossack arrived in the camp with dispatches giving an account that the dragoons were attacked by a strong party of mountaineers. This rash attempt of these

mountaineers was premeditated; for the General demanded nothing but a free passage through the country, and engaged to leave them unmolested. The poor people felt to their cost the effects of attacking regular troops, of which they had never seen any before. Several of them were brought prisoners to the camp; they were strong, able-bodied men, fit for any service.

"The Emperor before he left Astrakhan, had sent manifestos to all the petty princes and chiefs of Daghestan [the mountainous corner of the great Caucasus barrier along which the army was now making its way, by the shore] declaring that he did not come to invade; that he would pay ready money for provisions. Some of them did not agree. Such is often the case with free independent states, as are those of the Daghestan.

"The 29th and 30th the whole army with artillery and baggage were transported across the river Agrakhan. The Emperor made a plan and ordered a small fortress to be raised, to keep such stores as we could not carry along with us.

"In the meantime ten thousand Cossacks arrived from the Don, all horsemen, and also the five thousand Kalmuks sent by the Ayuka Khan. They had many spare horses which were of great use. The Emperor, our great leader, reviewed the army daily on horseback, which was now increased to more than thirty thousand combatants—a number sufficient to have conquered all Persia, had that been intended.

"At length the carriages arrived which Shavkal had engaged to furnish for the artillery and baggage—three hundred wagons drawn by two oxen each. But their harnessing not being such as we were used to, we had not a little trouble in setting them a-going.

"About the middle of August the army was put in motion and marched in several columns from Agrakhan. Our road lay between the sea and the Circassian mountains. In the evening we encamped at a brook of brackish, muddy water.

"Next morning we marched toward the mountains where was plenty of grass, among which I observed great quantities of a certain herb called Roman-wormwood, which the hungry horses devoured very greedily. Next day we found about five hundred of our horses dead. This was ascribed to their eating the wormwood, which perhaps might be the case.

Our Kalmuks feasted on the dead horses for several days.

"As both the water and grass were bad, we decamped. His Majesty often walked on foot, in a white nightcap and a short dimity waistcoat. In the heat of the day when the army halted, he used to go into the Empress' coach and sleep for half an hour. . . .

"August 22d, the day being exceedingly hot, no water was found on the road, beneath a continuous cloud of dust, fatiguing to the heavily armed troops and the cattle. At night we came to some wells of fresh water, but there was hardly water enough for the people to drink.

"The next day toward noon we perceived a number of horse and foot on the tops of the neighboring hills; they came down with intent to drive off some of our cattle which brought on a skirmish. During the action our infantry kept close in the camp.

"Our dragoons and irregulars [the Cossacks and Kalmuks] were in pursuit of the enemy. The carrying off of cattle is supposed to have been their principal aim, as it would have been madness to have expected to gain any advantage by attacking such an army of veteran troops, well provided and well conducted."

Nevertheless, the Daghestani mountaineers were attacking the army as John Bell half suspected, and as the action of the Russians made evident. The horses and cattle of the army suffered from lack of grazing—the grass being dry at the end of the summer—and Peter himself began to show irresolution.

"The Emperor, being apprehensive of an ambush and of a large body of mountaineers being lodged on the other side of the hills ordered the army to break camp about three o'clock. The march toward the mountains was performed in six columns. The Emperor had hourly intelligence from the dragoons and irregulars, who at length dispersed the enemy, and took possession of a town. However, it being then too late to return to our former camp, the army encamped that night on a plain between the hills, on the banks of a small rivulet where we had but indifferent quarters. The next day we marched back to our former camp, staying there two days waiting for the return of the dragoons and irregulars.

"The troops being all reassembled on the 27th the Emperor marched again to the southeastward toward Derbent through a dry parched plain . . . the city of Derbent<sup>4</sup> is the frontier belonging to the Shah of Persia. . . . Near our camp there are several pits flowing with the bituminous liquid called naphtha. The naphtha here is of a blackish color, very inflammable; it is used by the Persians to burn in their lamps, and not easily extinguished by rain.

"The 30th, the army set forward, the Emperor being on horseback at the head of his troops which made a fine appearance. The governor of Derbent, attended by his officers and magistrates, came in a body to wait on the Emperor, and to present him with the golden keys of the town and of the citadel. They offered the keys on a cushion covered with very rich Persian brocade, the governor and all his attendants kneeling during this short ceremony. . . . The Emperor, at the head of his army, marched through the city and camped among the vineyards about an English mile to the southeast. The Persian governor made His Majesty an offer of his house. But to avoid putting the inhabitants to any inconvenience, or perhaps for other reasons, the Emperor declined and [after inspecting the city walls] returned to his camp.

"In this situation we continued some days and were making the needful preparations for advancing farther into the country as soon as the transports with provisions and stores from Astrakhan, which were daily expected, should arrive.

"They did arrive in safety. But a most unfortunate accident happened. The night after their arrival, a violent storm of wind from the northeast drove the greater part of them ashore where they were wrecked and dashed to pieces.

"This misfortune put a stop to the further progress of His Majesty's arms; having nothing before him but a country exhausted of all necessities, the Emperor determined to return to Astrakhan by the same way we had come, leaving a garrison in Derbent. . . .

"As we had seen no rain since our landing on this coast, our people suffered not a little from the great heat, continued clouds of dust<sup>5</sup> and want of water. We were almost daily alarmed by small parties of Daghestanis who made their ap-

pearance on the tops of the hills but fled always at the approach of our Cossacks.

"On the 29th of September, after a most fatiguing march, Their Majesties and all the army arrived in safety at the fort of Agrakhan."

Peter laid the cornerstone of his new fort, and sailed back with the remainder of his army to Astrakhan. There he received a message of congratulation from the Senate—which had heard of the start of his expedition down the Caspian by then—urging him to "go forward in the footsteps of Alexander."

Peter returned to Moscow, where Maria Kantemir had had the miscarriage, so that no male child had come out of her. He did not cross the invisible frontier into Asia again.

### *Failure in the Caucasus*

Except for the brief narrative of the Scottish surgeon, John Bell, there exists no detailed account of the extraordinary miscarriage of Peter's army of invasion. This time he made no retort to the eulogy of the Senate, which received him, a little uncertainly, in Petersburg, as a second Alexander returning from conquest. (Stralenberg heard rumors later, which he would hardly believe but which may well have been true, that "Peter the Great going to Persia, passed whole days without water, marched on foot like a common soldier, covered with dust, his feet sinking into the sand, and so forth. On the other side, the Empress who accompanied him, made exhausted soldiers come by turns into her carriage, five or six at a time, and chatted with them familiarly, like a mother with her children." That is Catherine to the life, not the titled empress that Stralenberg visualized in the post-Poltava days, but the complaisant maid of Marienburg, the "joy of the army camp" of Sheremet'ev.)

Putting aside the topical nonsense about following Alexander or making pleasure trips into the embattled Caucasus, what Peter hoped to do, and what he failed to accomplish, is quite clear.

Peter had not forgotten the surrender on the Pruth or the loss of Azov, his first achievement.

Five years before, in 1717, the Kuban steppe and the Caucasus had been in revolt as well as the Volga and Kirghiz steppe—necessitating the building of the Tsaritsyn canal defense line. The disaster to the Russian column on the east coast of the Caspian had been damaging to Russian prestige.

The Caucasus, where the Azerbaijan communication corridor led south to the fertile southern coast of the Caspian (part of Persia then as now), had become an area of contest between Turkey, Persia, and the southward-pressing Russians. Whoever held the communications of the Caucasus held strategic control of the Caspian and the Black seas. (And from that same Black Sea Peter, the victor of Nystad, had been barred much earlier by the Turks.)

It was almost inevitable that Peter, with the massive army and fleet available in the Baltic area, should return to the Black Sea-Caucasus front, which he wanted to enlarge to take in the Caspian. He needed to clear the Volga end of the Baltic-Caspian trade axis.

The way for such a sweep to the south had been most carefully prepared. Before its destruction, the Cherkasky expedition had built a fort on the east shore of the Caspian, at the ancient mouth of the Amu Darya (Krasnovodsk). On the west shore the Russians had been sponsoring the Christian Georgian and Armenian peoples, occupying the most fertile valleys of the Caucasus. For a long time Armenian patriarchs and merchants had been urging the creation of an Armenian state in the Caucasus, around Irivan, Tabriz, Shamakhi. Such a plan had found great favor in Petersburg, especially since Russian trade with that part of Asia had suffered, in competition with Turkish and Persian interests. And much of the eastern trade passed through the hands of Armenians. Peter himself had said that control of the trade avenues through the Black Sea, Caucasus, and Caspian was "indispensable to Russia."

In the Caucasus the Russian interests had backed a puppet Georgian-Persian, Forsidan Bey by name, who kept changing

his religion from Christian to Moslem as his varying prospects turned.

After occupying the Caspian with his fleet and the mid-Caucasus with his army, Peter intended to seize Trebizond—or so the Turkish diplomats thought. In August 1722 (when Peter was accepting the keys of Derbent before the loss of his ships and supplies) the wazir at Constantinople told Nepluyev (the ambassador who had balked at eating Russian carrot pie): “The whole of the reign of this tsar has been one war, without truce, in which he has given no respite to his neighbors.”

About that time Nepluyev thought war with Turkey in the Caucasus to be inevitable, and sent his son away to safety after burning his papers. He feared that the Turks would be aided by England and Denmark, who would bring pressure on the Baltic.

The way into the Caspian provinces of Persia had been opened. Russian agents had represented that the tsar was advancing thither to aid the hard-pressed Persians against the Afghans and all rebels.

So the stage had been set for the Russian army to enter the Caucasus, to occupy the mountains by aiding the Armenians and Georgians against Turkish authority, and to occupy also the north of Persia by pretending to aid the Isfahan government against the Afghans. The diplomats and special agents had done their part. John Bell and his confrères of the Persian mission had been picked up on the way.

The powerful army had been concentrated at the frontier port of Terki, and strengthened by the Don Cossacks and Kalmuks. Even Tolstoy, who had married the daughter of the Cossack hetman, had been included among the advisers.

All that remained was for the chief actor to appear on the stage, as victor over the Turks, conqueror of the mighty Caucasus, admiral of the Caspian Sea, and occupant of the southern, Persian shore of that sea. The Senate, obviously prepared for such a triumphal climax, had addressed him as a second Alexander.

But he turned back at the Derbent gate.

The drought, the failure of grazing, the harassment of the Daghestani mountaineers, and the wreck of the supply fleet

should not have prevented an experienced army from proceeding. Peter, always cautious, remembered too keenly the disaster at the Pruth, and the Cherkasky massacre. Apparently he felt incapable of going on, and became frightened, and took the easiest way out of this dilemma by retreating.

Still he tried to have the original plan carried out. The diplomats were called in again hastily. Peter's ambassador on the Caspian informed the Persians that the tsar would indeed aid them in driving out the troublesome Kurds and Afghans. A Russian brigade commanded by a colonel landed at Resht on the southern shore of the Caspian and occupied it. Another force advanced beyond Derbent and besieged Baku (now the center of the great Caucasus-Caspian oilfields) in spite of the Persian protest that they were quite able to protect themselves against rebels there.

Then the Persian ambassador in Petersburg was compelled to agree to a new treaty between the two nations, by which all the Caspian provinces were ceded to Russia.

But in the months intervening some sort of order had been restored at Isfahan, and the new treaty was disowned, while the Russian ambassador was besieged in his turn at Resht.

The end of the Persian venture was that the Russian forces withdrew from the fertile southern coast but kept a foothold on the west coast around Baku, and eventually got the Turks to agree that they should stay there. The fleet dwindled. The new state that Peter offered Christian Armenians in the mountains did not take shape.

So the all-enveloping plan of an advance toward the inland seas and India yielded only a short step forward of the frontier posts along the shore where John Bell had spent some uncomfortable weeks.

Peter, returning to his city, threw his energy into exploration not by himself but by others toward a far distant frontier.

### *The Hidden Conflict*

Peter returned from the Caspian in better health. His mind seemed to be clear, and for a while he was free from parox-



ysm. Dr. Blumentrost, who had replaced Erskine as his personal physician, had stopped his drinking, so that John Bell observed that the tsar "had an aversion to all sots."

In Petersburg he threw himself into his usual intense physical activity.

"I have more than once seen him stop in the street," Bell relates, "to receive petitions from persons who thought themselves wronged . . . he could dispatch more business in a morning than a houseful of senators could do in a month. He rose almost every morning in the wintertime before four o'clock; was often at his cabinet, where two private secretaries paid constant attendance, by three o'clock. He often went so early to the Senate as to occasion the senators being raised out of their beds to attend him there.

"His Majesty never allowed his time of rest to be broken in upon unless in case of fire. When any [such] accident happened, there was a standing order to awake him, and he was frequently the first at the fire, where he always remained giving the necessary orders, till all further danger was over. . . . In acts of religion he appeared devout, but not superstitious. I have seen him, not liking the clerk's manner of reading the Psalms, take the book from the clerk and read them himself . . . he sometimes diverted himself at his turning loom . . . in his later days he supped on hare or wild-fowl roasted very dry, drank small beer and sometimes a few glasses of wine, and generally was in bed before ten o'clock at night.

"Seldom a day passed that he was not seen in every part of his city."

Although following his physician's orders, for the first time in his life, the builder of Petersburg seemed to be hurrying activity into every minute of waking time in that spring of 1723. He sought after Italian and German books on the Slavs and had them translated hastily "with useless words left out."

His longed-for central Academy of Sciences was forming at last, with foreign savants, and maps and instruments he had requisitioned at Paris. (There he had seen Cassini's new Planisphere or world projection, and the splendid maps of Guillaume Delisle; his Academy followed out the vague concept

of aged Leibnitz, but it grew to resemble the Académie Royale des Sciences that assembled the finest scientific minds of Europe in Paris.)

Among the exhibits of the new Academy stood the jar with the head of Mary Hamilton.

When he rode in his two-horse chaise through the streets in the gray half-light of a summer's night, the spires, the walled gardens, and the sculptured colonnades took on the semblance of Paris itself.

To the building of this city he had devoted the creative energy of his *alter ego*, Alexashka Menshikov, for twenty years. Now it rose about him, whole and beautiful in design, utterly new and apart from the hinterland behind him. And within it, Menshikov had enthroned himself, like a king.

The small son of Alexis was not there. Kept in Moscow under the tutelage of a trustworthy man, an honest Scot, he spent his time between the Transfiguration and the Kremlin. Bruce himself relates, of Peter's visits to his namesake, "The tsar was vastly pleased with his sprightliness; seeing some models of fortification laying on the table, he asked the young prince the use and advantage of each work, to which he gave his answers so readily . . . that his grandfather, pleased, embraced him and made him a present of his picture richly set with diamonds, and gave him an ensign's commission in the first regiment of Guards."

Yet Bruce knew and the elder Peter knew that the oath of succession enforced by Peter had virtually put the six-year-old boy apart from the throne. For by ancient custom the grandson was heir to the tsardom of Russia. The populace had sworn to acknowledge *whoever* should be named.

And the Guards themselves, now officered by the nobility, had become in reality a Praetorian Guard, the instrument of whoever sat upon the throne.

At the same time the clergy, ruled by the new Synod, was being removed further from the authority of the tsardom. The *Oberprocurator*, heading the Synod council, did no more than manage the finances of the churches that, in the Moscow-Petersburg area, were directed to attend more closely to

the education and health of the people than to archaic prayer and pageantry of salvation.

As in the Synod, so in the new Senate. In that nine-man conclave, the Oberprocurator was Yaghuzinsky the ex-boot-black, who watched the others on Peter's behalf, and made certain that Peter's wishes were carried out.

There was, then, no longer a patriarch of Moscow who might interfere with the service of the state. There was no longer a hetman of the Ukraine, for the military chieftains of that vast plain were kept in the northern cities, provided with titles and luxurious living, stripped of actual authority.

There was no longer a Duma or council with authority to carry out the laws of the land.

That authority now lay without recourse in the hands of Peter. Civilian law had come under military rule (the ukaz of the Army, 1716, modeled after Swedish and German law) and the ranks of the nobility depended upon rank in the army (ukaz of the Table of Ranks, 1722).

In the autumn of 1723 Peter suddenly tested his people by a new manifesto. His throne, and so his authority, was to be shared by Catherine. She had aided him faithfully in the great wars, and "it is the custom of every Christian monarch to crown his consort."

Since no woman had been crowned in Russia—except the Polish princess, Marina, the empress of a week in the Time of Troubles—it was necessary to devise a title for Catherine. That should be, the Senate and the Synod duly decided, *Imperatrítsa*, Empress.

The Senate and the Synod bowed to Peter's wishes, as the ancient servitors of the throne had bowed their heads down to the girdle before the spoken command of the sitter on the throne. No open debate took place, as in the time of Alexis, the father of Peter. There was no Ordin Nastchokin to cry out angrily. After the death of Peter's son, there was nobody who cared to cross Peter's will.

But what could he effect among the people? He had become remote, walled in by his city, apart from the land itself; he had become the semblance of a tsar, issuing ukazi by the score, arguing, quoting Saul and Absalom, making his notes

on the decrees of the Senate, controlling the wealth-ridden Guard, and in consequence the army and navy of Russia. Quietly Catherine nursed him and waited, while Menshikov entertained foreign diplomats in his palace where the guests bowed to him as "the Most Serene Highness." All three waited for the popular response to the word of Catherine's crowning.

It came by reports of informers, by courier from Yaghuzinsky at the Transfiguration office of that Public Prosecutor.

Down in the Ukraine the Cossacks were clamoring. Eleven had blown themselves to death with gunpowder. An ex-soldier, Varlaam, had taken to the roads, preaching the coming of Antichrist.

Migration increased along the roads, away from Moscow. Deserters from the army posts took their weapons with them, and went off in groups that kept together. Some of these bands disappeared toward the "wastelands"—some took to brigandage along the roads in expert fashion. They maintained themselves by arms against the regular troops.

At Verkhuturie in the Urals other bands were reported slipping through the mountains and avoiding the road to Tobolsk. The penalty of knouting had been laid on such unauthorized travel. Segments of Old Believers joined the migrants, to escape the new rigorous penalties laid on their sects. Self-burning started up again, spasmodically.

Apparently these dissidents believed that in setting aside his grandson Peter had condemned them to an unknown, unlawful future. What else could account for the popular murmuring?

In spite of the murmuring, masked pageants and balls went on at Petersburg. These centered more and more upon Menshikov and Catherine—who appeared once as an Amazon queen attended by sailors. Foreign envoys noted the contrast between the spectacles and the popular feeling.

"Masquerading is at our doors," the French ambassador wrote, "while the common people have tears in their eyes. We are on the brink of some sad extremity. Misery increases daily; the streets are thronged with people trying to sell their children. Orders have been issued to give nothing to beggars.

Yet what will become of them if they do not turn to robbing on the highways? At night thieves come out into the streets. Travelers are attacked openly on the Petersburg road. No single storage depot in Russia is filled with grain. Two hundred thousand rubles have been appropriated for the purchase of grain from Prussia and Danzig, but what is that, for this vast country? . . . In Astrakhan food is stored up for an army of eighty thousand, for more than a year." Again, he wrote: "Appropriations for the army and navy have been exhausted in useless expenditures." A fellow ambassador added his word, more qualified: "Grain has been stored up so that, if the harvest is not bad, there will be no fear of famine . . . however, discontent in all ranks could hardly be greater."

Peter understood the popular feeling and the danger of rebellion. Open rebellion he could limit and cope with. This silent resistance, bodiless and leaderless, was like a phantom enemy impossible to grapple. He wished that he had not confiscated for state sale all the wooden coffins in the land. Informers said that villagers complained that they had been stripped living, and now had been left to die naked. Men held to such foolish things, even to a dozen smooth planks after their death. He issued a new direction to the Oberprocurator of the Church. The Synod should make its teachings clear, issue simple books on religion, "so the countrymen can understand them."

When he was taken to see Catherine trying on her coronation dress for the first time, he stopped in his tracks, flushed with anger. On her plump body hung lengths of shining brocade, heavy with gold and silver filigree that sparkled with jewels. Gripping it in his hands, he shook it, shouting.

"These things—would pay for my dragoons—a year."

After he calmed down, he helped design the crown she should wear, after the imperial crowns of Byzantium, and he added jewels of his mine to ornament it. Menshikov contributed a great pigeon's-blood ruby, bought in Peking.

Catherine was crowned in May 1724, in the Usspensky cathedral of Moscow, near the tombs of the ancient tsars. After her coronation, great courtiers and poor folk alike

sought to be admitted to her, to buy or to plead for her favor. She became, as it were, protectress against the anger of the tsar. In her new role Menshikov aided her; together they dwarfed the others of the court. Catherine herself seemed to change not at all; she mended quarrels, and nursed Peter with the placidity of a peasant.

Informers brought before Peter the case of William Mons, the brother of the vintner's daughter of the Sloboda. This handsome attendant of the throne, a chamberlain who had sought Catherine's protection, had been aided by her to wealth in devious ways. William Mons, so the informers said, entered Catherine's room covertly at night. So, beyond doubt, he had been intimate with her.

Under question by torture Mons confessed. He told the sums he had got by his influence with Catherine and by the service he rendered Menshikov. So many thousands of rubles. He named all others involved. Of his relations with Catherine he said nothing. Peter questioned him.

Rumors ran through the corridors of the imperial palace. The word passed that the days of Catherine and Menshikov were numbered. No one cared about William Mons. For Peter, obviously, was trying to control one of his fits of rage.

He was seen more often in talk with Maria Kantemir, whom he had hardly visited since Astrakhan. For days he appeared to be ill, and the French ambassador sent an urgent dispatch to Versailles to report that, although Catherine did not change her daily routine a particle, strain showed in her face.

This was not like Peter's violent castigation of the thieving of his favorites some years before. After a long hesitation, he removed Menshikov from command of the War College, and announced that no one was to carry out money transactions with Catherine. Her personal property and deposits in foreign lands were taken over by his Treasury officers, under pretense of arranging them in due order, so there should be no further talk of spoliation.

Once, when Catherine sat beside him in his light sleigh, he drove her close to where the body of William Mons hung.

That might have been accident, yet witnesses hastened to tell of it. Catherine acted as if nothing unusual had taken place—although her arm had brushed against the body of the man who had been her lover.

Peter's actions were those of a man self-tormented. Obviously shaken by the testimony against the two upon whom he had most relied, he fell into indecision.

Unexpectedly he had the head of Mons put into a jar of spirits and placed in the hall by which Catherine entered her apartments. It was a boy's trick and the woman who had been Marta of Marienburg ignored it. Yet Peter, in his growing fatigue, had struck a weak blow at the two whom he had helped rise to power.

He struck also at their accomplices. Where Mons's body hung he had placards posted bearing the names of all the nobles mentioned by Mons in his testimony under torture.

After that Peter had one of his worst spells. Still he forced his body into the small sleigh to drive around the streets of his city, to hear the petitions of the common folk waiting for him in the alleys farthest from the Admiralty.

Ironically in those last days of extreme weakness, he felt to the full his responsibility to his people, for whom he had effected so little. He must have felt his mistake in raising to such supreme authority the favorites upon whom he had doted and depended. You might say that, dying, he became Peter the Great.

### *The Birth of a New Nation*

He turned his face away from the Baltic to the east. It was too late. By now he was incapable of journeying there, and he had always been incapable of visualizing what was beyond his sight and touch.

He talked much with Prokopovich, the priest who wove the thought of western savants deftly with the threads of religious belief. Prokopovich held an assured position at court. Peter never saw a twelve-year-old boy making his way on foot from Archangel—now abandoned as a trading port—and feeding himself from the things on the ground with other “wan-

dering men." That boy Lomonosov had in him the feeling of the old Russian bylini, of the language of the folk. His writings, in poverty and in prison, would endure beyond those of other Russians of Peter's time.

Peter had never known the "lands beyond the Volga." The new textbooks sent thither by the Oberprocurator of the churches could not be interpreted by the folk of those prairies, part Bashkir and part Cheremiss. They had their own "alphabet books" and "cipher books" handwritten by monks or prisoners of war who wanted to educate their own children.

In the new Academy of Sciences foreigners were preparing to teach the elements of Euclid's geometry. The Volga monks could not understand the need of measuring what God had created.

Beyond the Urals Peter planned to effect local government that would serve better than his *gubernaria* of the Moscow-Petersburg land. But Grigori Stroganov, whose family had owned the Ural passes in the century before, could not be persuaded to leave his new Petersburg palace, or his hunting park stocked with deer, pheasants, and boar. The Cherkasky heir who had agreed to take the governor general appointment in Siberia had indeed been born in the east; but he had observed the fate of Gagarin, and he contented himself with residing in the governor's wooden citadel at Tobolsk, only a few days' ride beyond the Urals, and carrying out to the letter such orders as the War College issued.

Cherkasky was safely bound to Petersburg, since his daughter had married into the Sheremet'ev family, and the combined families owned more than one hundred and fifty thousand serfs on their huge estates near Moscow. At Moscow the Sheremet'ev palace had walls of Siberian malachite; its gardens had artificial lakes ornamented with Chinese pagodas.

Already the Moscow-Petersburg land was taking on the semblance of a peer and peasant regime—the peasantry fast becoming serfs.

Beyond the Urals as the fur revenues fell lower, and pioneer exploiters passed from the scene, the lands were coming into the hands of small farming and mercantile communities,



widely separated and often out of touch with Tobolsk. The first schools were being established by merchants on their own account, who found teachers where they could. Usually exiles became the teachers, or wandering priests—yielding a strange harvest of learning, out of Old Believers' catechisms, Lutheran prayer books, or Ukrainian Latin grammars.

In Petersburg the new academies taught, first, military art; second, naval science; third, mathematics.

In Siberia appeared churches with the old familiar towers and bulbed domes, which were forbidden in Petersburg, where even the cathedrals were French baroque.

Within this region known only as Siberia, the far frontiers influenced the people, for the Baraba settlements carried on commerce with the Kirghiz, their nearest neighbors, as did Irkutsk and Nerchinsk with the Manchu Chinese. The European wigs and German vests and pantaloons ordained for Petersburg were seldom seen in such far places.

Very slowly as a glacier adheres together and moves by weight of the particles within it, a new nationality was forming east of the Urals. It was taking shape not by prearranged plan but by the settlements adapting themselves to the land, under stress of hardships. There was no common law. Generations later a western military commander sent to enforce laws in Siberia would ask, "When was there ever law in Siberia?" The rude Muscovite nationality of the time of the first Romanovs exerted no influence now that so many deserters and exiles had permeated the east—and the children of Streltsi, Ukrainians, Poles, Livonians, and Swedes had grown up to take their place in the population—and because that same Muscovite nationality was changing and becoming the rule of the Petersburg court.

During Peter's time, while population around the city of Moscow had diminished, the population of the eastern settlements had grown four or five times in numbers. Families had dwellings where individuals had hunted or cleared ground. These families developed by necessity special skills, in trading and handicraft as well as agriculture. Villages made impromptu treaties with their Kirghiz or Kalmuk neighbors.

More than ever, these villages were shifting to the warmer

southern valleys, out of the ice tundras and the snowbound northern taiga. They penetrated to the Chinese side of the Altai; they reached the headwaters of the Irtysh River, where Bucholtz's column had been driven back; they farmed the land far south of the Baraba lake.

The far northern posts established during the first rush for furs were deserted except for the penal colonies along the Arctic's edge.

In an odd manner the government's exploitation of Siberian metals during the Northern War added to the mixed eastern population. So great was the demand for iron and copper from the Urals that serfs were conscripted throughout the west for the "mining service." This labor in the shafts became detested by the peasants, who deserted steadily and in numbers. The fugitives made their way east rather than face the guards on the western roads. The ability of the foreign manager, William Henning, and the skill of Demidov could not keep the peasants in the mines and smelters.

In the quest for silver and the always elusive gold, bands of laborers were shipped to old diggings and even to prehistoric pits within the Siberian mountains. In the Yenisei River basin the workers combed the icy marshes. Free gold had been found there by some earlier prospectors. It was not to be found again. Yet beyond the Yenisei, there was the rumor of gold at Baikal, and then at the mountains by the outer Ocean Sea.

Always rumors centered around Kamchatka, the mass of land that thrust into that ocean. The mountain spine that divided Kamchatka into two coasts, the Bolshoi River that might be rich in gold, the sable skins that rewarded hunters who survived—all these made the peninsula a breeding ground of rumor. Moreover the way to it was still barred by the reindeer people, the Koriaks and Chukchi; Russian explorers had to go across by sea, from Okhotsk, through ice and storms. Few of them survived the sea and attacks by natives. Atlasov, freed from prison, died on the peninsula. Only one of them got back to Petersburg to tell his story to Peter.

For a while Kamchatka was ruled by a Pole who was also a

mystic, Kosyrevsky, who had escaped from the iron mines. He built a monastery at the edge of the sea and told of visions that had revealed gold to him, out on the islands of the sea.

These islands stretched forth in two chains, to the south, and to the east. They lay like steppingstones within easy sail of each other. Kosyrevsky had ventured upon the islands to the south, called the Kurils.

After that Peter sent two explorers out to Kamchatka, with orders to report to no one but himself. They built boats and penetrated farther to the south, toward the larger islands called Nippon. Rumor had it that gold could be found in Nippon, where the temples were plated with it.

About the islands to the east there was more uncertainty. The Chukchi told of a greater land lying beyond them. That might of course be the continent called America on the maps of the European geographers. Still mariners heard of a land not yet explored, Yezo-land. This might lie between the two continents, or the continents themselves might be joined by a mountain range not yet reached.

### *The Unknown Land*

After the winter storms began in 1724 Peter insisted on being taken out to inspect the work on the Ladoga canalway. And there he had tried to work with men freeing a stranded boat, in water up to his waist. Ill after this exposure, he returned to Petersburg. When snow set in, he kept much to his house.

From the leaded glass window of his bedroom he could see the spire of the Admiralty, and watch the shipping moored in the river. Over in the palace his secretaries waited in the cabinet, filing away his scrawled notes as they came in, and hearing the talk of the corridors that the tsar was in great pain, attended constantly by the foreign physician Blumentrost and the empress.

There were proclamations to be signed, new laws to be put in writing, the transport of the geographer Delisle from Paris to be arranged; the Senate had voluminous matters, postponed during the tsar's illness; the commanders of the Baltic

fleet had winter routine to be arranged. And there was whispering about the succession to the throne. . . .

At the end of December Peter seemed to have one fixed idea. It was to explore the farthest east by sea. Many of his memories and longings linked together in that thought.

The world map he had seen in Paris had been a blank just there, where Asia and America joined, or did not join. The older Delisle had argued that the mountains of Siberia extended along an isthmus to the tip of what they called the New World . . . the old map of that shrewd Nicholas Witzén, who understood more than all the other wiseacres, showed the sea between the continents.

Peter had no way of knowing that the Cossack Dezhnev had sailed his small boat along the edge of that sea in the time of his father Alexis.

But in those mountains or in that unknown land might be found new deposits of iron, or the gold that Siberia had failed to yield him. Had not the impoverished Swedes planned to send an expedition by sea, to claim the island of Madagascar, that might yield them new riches—as those other stubborn sea powers, the Dutch and English, had profited from the far Indies and India itself? . . . He had ships enough lying idle and officers enough to launch an armada. He would send three frigates himself to Madagascar, ships made to appear like merchantmen, not to arouse suspicion, with two sets of orders. The secret orders would empower them to take possession of the island in his name. Of course troops would be carried in the frigates.

When told that none of the ships were in condition for such a voyage, he stormed at Apraksin, telling the old admiral how to fit new sheathing over the hulls.

Then he was told that, as he commanded, the ships had set out. Owing to bad weather, they had had to put into Revel for the winter. They could not make the voyage.

Again Peter returned to his idea. Was it not possible, then, to go by the Ice Sea, around the tip of Siberia, down to the rich trading ports of China? And to go beyond China to India?

"I think a passage can be found," he said. "In France, they believe it exists—they call it the strait of Anian."

Old Apraksin, more anxious about his master than about a fantastic voyage, said that the Dutch and English would have found it, if it was there.

"If we find it, it will be there."

Hour by hour Peter worked out details of the plan in his mind. It was true that the Dutch and English had failed to find the northeast passage, above Siberia. Better to begin the search on the waters of the Eastern Ocean. A skilled navigator and a captain would be needed. Admiral Sievers recommended Vitus Bering, the Dane. A Russian must go also. Sinavin recommended Alexei Chirikov. . . .

In the orders given him, Bering found the words "to inform yourself of the limits of Siberia and particularly if the eastern coast of Siberia is separate from America."

Carefully, to have his directions exactly understood, Peter wrote down in his own hand what the expedition was to accomplish. "Because I may not see the results," he told Apraksin.

1. To build in Kamchatka or some suitable place two ships of one or two decks.
2. To sail on these ships along the shore which runs to the north and which (since its limits are not known) may be part of the America coast.
3. To ascertain where it joins America. To sail on to the first settlements ruled by Europeans, and if a European ship should be met, learn from her the name of the coast, and put it down in writing. Make a landing, make detailed inspection, draw a map, and bring it here.

If his ships had not mastered the Caspian, and if they could not voyage to Madagascar, they should by his orders explore the Pacific to find the utmost extent of Siberia.

For days he did not sign the order, being in great pain. Seeing preparations made by priests in the adjoining room, he took interest in the chapel they were laying out. Ordering a movable chapel made, he advised about setting it up, near his bed. He had them place in the movable chapel the ikon with

which he had always traveled, and which he had never understood.

But he did not forget the order for the voyage of discovery. Sending for it, after he was too weak to speak, he signed it. When, however, they brought him another paper and asked him to write down the name of the person who would succeed him on the throne, and his directions to that person, he could only scrawl on the paper. Two of the words he scrawled have been taken to mean, "Forgive everything . . ."

In the night of January 27-28, 1725, Peter I died.

## VI

# REACTION OF THE LAND AGAINST THE CITY

### *Impotency of the Family*

AT THE time of his death the country had been on the verge of revolt. The news that the Giant Tsar no longer lived sped from village to village with the speed of hard-ridden horses. It came to the people like the clang of Vvestnik.

It had the effect of a truce so unexpected as to stun the minds of the people. This effect was much more pronounced than that of the report of peace with the Swedes. The treaty signed at Nystad had not changed the life of the Russian people in any respect. Peter's end stunned the nation, because there was no certainty as to what would come after him.

Only by slow degrees did the lower classes become aware of the consequences of his actions.

Peter Alexeivich had a hard death, as he had a hard life. The Italian specialist and the English surgeon Horn who attended him found his body little more than a shell of infection, with kidneys diseased and loins swollen with pus, so that a belated operation could only show that he had a limit of hours to live. The French ambassador reported that the Giant Tsar in great agony clung like a child to some hope of religion, embodied in the shrine beside his bed.

It was the tragedy of Peter's life that he realized the actuality of what he was doing only in those last months, when he could change nothing of what he had effected.

He had lived most of his life self-absorbed, saturated much

of the time with alcohol, filled with exultation or depression by his own immediate actions. His restless journeying and hurrying from person to person had acted as an anodyne. Only in the building of his city beyond Russia, and his fleet upon the outer Baltic Sea, had he shown a full awareness of what he was undertaking.

Certainly there are indications of a change of mind during those last months—in his sudden attempt to explore the east rather than return to his haunts in western Europe, in his removal of Menshikov from the War Office and the charges he laid against Menshikov, in his placing the head of William Mons at Catherine's door, and in his turning to the one woman, Maria Kantemir, who was Catherine's antagonist. His last coherent act was to plan the exploration of the sea beyond Siberia; at the same time he refused to name in so many words either Catherine or her daughter or Menshikov the next ruler of Russia. Would Peter have failed to provide in some way for the future of his nation unless he distrusted the group of great favorites he had put in power?

Menshikov and Catherine began to make certain of their hold upon the throne as soon as they heard the result of the operation by the English surgeon. They no longer had to think of Peter's anger; they could pose as the cherished wife and the heart-friend of the dying monarch. Catherine slipped from the sick chamber to consult with Menshikov in the ante-room. Among the officers of the Guards regiments, the Whispering Favorite distributed a small fortune, and promised them increase in pay besides. On her part Catherine remembered to make up the arrears in pay of the garrison of the new Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Officers were brought to her door to peer in at her, while she wept and murmured distinctly, "I know you will not desert me."

During the hours of the last night, leaders gathered at the palace. There the favorites met the heads of the Senate and of the old aristocracy, and the clergy. Since Peter had chosen no successor, they would have to make a choice themselves. The churchmen and many of the great Slav aristocrats, the boyars of yesterday, hoped to name the young grandson—Alexis' son.



Dmitri Galitzin spoke for a joining together of all groups—with the grandson named tsar, Catherine his guardian.

But at this point the shadow of Peter fell across the controversy. For Menshikov, Tolstoy, and the favorites as a group had helped engineer the death of Alexis. They dared not grant the tsardom to Alexis' son, young as he was. The most resourceful of them, Tolstoy, made a brilliant presentation of the claim of the peasant empress. Catherine, he argued, had shared the working hours of the Giant Tsar; she knew his will better than anyone else; she had gone on campaign with the army, and was favored by the army; Peter, by crowning her, had tacitly favored her himself.

Was it not Catherine, Tolstoy demanded, who had saved the tsar and the army itself at the Pruth?

Before midnight the controversy was decided by the entrance of Guards officers, demanding that Catherine be named.

So, two generations before, a delegation of Streltsi had appeared in Moscow before the patriarch and the tsarevnas and boyars to voice their decision as to who should occupy the throne. Yet the Streltsi had been actuated by religious motives and the desires of their plebeian class. The Guard controlled the new army, and it had been won over by Menshikov to support, not a member of the Romanov family but a foreign woman whom nobody in the room believed to be capable of ruling.

The Guard and Tolstoy won. The opposition to Catherine was silenced. And before daybreak life left the shell of a man in the sickroom.

Beginning that gray morning in Petersburg for twenty-seven years, the throne of Russia was held by a peasant woman, an immature boy, two other women—one the daughter of an imbecile—a child and a young drunkard without sense. One was Livonian, three were Germans. Another German manipulated affairs from behind the throne.

With one exception they were no more than figures to appear before the curtain, and to sign decrees. The conflict between the basic forces in Russia went on around them. It was the old struggle between the people of the land and the

foreigners and favorites, the pull of the millions against the thrust of the tens, the revolt of the outer frontiers against the central control. But the conflict developed new phases.

Catherine, then, was empress for a year. To be exact, nearly seventeen months. For long years she had drunk glass for glass with Peter; she had nursed him—and probably prolonged his life—and she had endured much from him. Now she enjoyed herself like any middle-aged prostitute or *hausfrau*, but with great courage.

She had for that moment an incredible grandeur; an Aladdin's lamp of unlimited powers had been placed in her hand. From Asia she ordered jewels and from Paris she obtained gilded carriages lined with embroidered silk—she who had never been allowed to visit Karlsbad, much less Paris.

Often she drank through the night with the adroit and mannerly foreign gentlemen who came to her apartment, as William Mons had come—among them the Portuguese Devier, chief of the Petersburg police. Now she saw no more the face of Maria Kantemir, whose miscarriage at Astrakhan five years before had happened under the hands of a Greek physician who took pay from Catherine. Just as quietly Catherine dealt, as empress, with the other woman of her dislike. In her Ladoga prison, Eudoxia was moved into a cell underground, and there given only one attendant, a peasant woman without sense. In so doing Catherine removed the actual tsaritsa of Russia from public observation, although not from public memory.

In her sixteen months' release from inhibitions, Catherine-Marta had no effect for good or ill on the disordered state of the nation—except to worry Menshikov by her expenditures. Menshikov, of course, attended to public affairs.

Released from the curb of Peter's anger, the Whispering Favorite exerted himself to gain unchallenged mastery of the Russia-to-be. Outwardly he supported Catherine loyally, while contriving to betroth his daughter to the solitary Romanov grandson.

His role for the present was to carry out, as Peter's *alter*

*ego*, the last measures of the Giant Tsar. (After first having Peter's charges of maladministration and defalcation against him dismissed.) Menshikov's very real interest lay in continuing the move to the west. He had been identified too long with the building of Petersburg, with its court and fleet, to alter that policy now. Like the Great Galitzin in Moscow he "had too many enemies." His only safety lay in appearing to be what he was not, the executioner of Peter's last testament. Since Peter had left no last testament,<sup>1</sup> that was very difficult even for a Menshikov to manage.

All of Peter's known wishes were carried out in careful detail, and at any cost. The Academy of Sciences across the Neva had its dedication. The geographer Delisle received his welcome when he arrived with other foreign scientists, to join that Academy. Vitus Bering got his expedition, and started on his way to explore the seas beyond Siberia. The Petersburg *Gazette* came off the press as regularly as before, although Menshikov determined what was to be printed in it. Political prisoners were released from jail, and the hated poll tax reduced a third, to pacify the public unrest.

Anna, the daughter of Peter, was married ceremoniously to Frederick, Duke of Holstein (also related to the ruling family of Prussia, and a claimant of sorts to the throne of Sweden). Peter had arranged this betrothal while he experimented with diplomacy in the Baltic zone. The fleet was kept up, as before, to make a show of force against the maritime powers, especially against England.

The outward show went on. It did not quite obscure the truth that, without Peter, there was no purpose in the show. Throughout the villages the folk invented a new cryptic parable: "The mice have buried the cat." That was Peter's funeral. And Menshikov himself soon had a new nickname: "the proudful Goliath."

One primitive mind saw through the sham of the Petersburg court. The brutal Yakhuzinsky, whether drunk or sober, whether wittingly or unwittingly, cast himself down on Peter's casket in the cathedral, tearing at it with his nails and howling, "Come forth and see what these fools are making of your Russia."

Yaghuzinsky was sent to a distant post in the Ukraine, and watched there. He had always had the courage to stand against Menshikov, and he had served as Oberprocurator, or watcher, of the Senate. After a while he was sent to Siberia.

Simultaneously another favorite reappeared at court from exile. Shafirov had been condemned to death during the purge of the extortioners of wealth. At the block, Peter had reprieved him, and Shafirov had contrived to be sent to mild confinement in Novgorod instead of banishment to Siberia. Returning to Petersburg, he aided Menshikov warily, and started the accumulation of a new fortune.

That same court of Petersburg presented a strange picture. While Catherine moved in and out of doors and coaches, costumed as a full autocrat—since Peter had crowned her empress—the Senate, which possessed theoretical authority to make laws, had no authority, because it had been subject to Peter's will. Nor did Menshikov dare strengthen the Senate. On the other hand he could not hope to maintain his hidden dictatorship long, when opposed by such families as the Dolgorukys and Galitzins.

The resourceful Tolstoy hit upon a happy solution of this dilemma. He and Ostermann devised a coalition council, to dictate measures to the Senate—the Supreme Secret Council. This body in turn advised Catherine what to do. At the same time it stifled the internecine conflict among the favorites around Menshikov. Besides Menshikov and Tolstoy, the council included a popular figure who was also one of the innovators, Admiral Apraksin—by then too old to take interest in anything except his health and banquets—two of the diplomats, the drunken Slav Gabriel and the clever German, Ostermann. To it were added a pair of Peter's coworkers known to be honest, Demidov and Tatischev.

Thus constituted, the Supreme Secret Council had representatives of both the old nobility and the innovators, between whom the balance could be adjusted by Menshikov, with Tolstoy's influence. So at least it was planned to be.

Then Catherine died. And the reaction of the land made itself felt, to weaken the brilliant improvisers.

By Lake Ladoga a strange happening took place. Into the

underground cell where Eudoxia still lived, men entered carrying lights. They wore court dress and they bowed to her, addressing her as "tsaritsa."

From the confinement of thirty years she was led out through doors that opened at her coming, to a waiting coach of elegant French design. There Eudoxia, white-haired, stale with poverty, was told that her grandson ruled the land as Peter II. And in time she was taken not to the Petersburg that she had glimpsed in its building but to the familiar upstairs chamber of the Moscow palace.

Eudoxia, they say, could still smile at a jest. In little things she showed keen interest, yet the palace seemed to her to offer no more than a comfortable sleeping room, into which the sun shone strangely in the morning.

### *Return to Moscow*

In the struggle for power between the old aristocracy of the land and the new favorites, the boy Peter was no more than the token of authority, to be won by either side. Menshikov tried to install him in his own Petersburg establishment, surrounding him with luxuries and servitors, while the Dolgoruky family coaxed him to go hunting with them. And Peter had grown to rather like his former custodian, Ostermann.

A third group, however, was making its presence felt. The new aristocracy of service—those who had gained official rank by military and other service—sought for better leadership and naturally influenced the army in its search. It sought relaxation of the intolerable burden of taxation, and its members, who had been kept on duty at Petersburg and at sea, endeavored to return to their estates. To this middle group careful thinkers like Ostermann paid heed, also the conscientious Tatischev and the indefatigable Demidov.

Reaction was setting in, two years after the passing of the Giant Tsar. That reaction worked against Menshikov, who came under increasing strain, deprived of Catherine's docile support. This strain caused him to clash with his former collaborators, to send the harmless Apraksin into exile, with

Devier, the Portuguese, and to banish the far from harmless Tolstoy to the Solovetsky monastery, isolated in the icebound White Sea. The loss of two great Slavs from the Supreme Secret Council did not help Menshikov's case.

This man of expedients, so brilliant under Peter's driving, seemed unable to cope with his own weakness. While he multiplied his exactions, he gave way to fits of helpless anger.

People were urging a return to Moscow; the young Peter forsook the favorite's regal home. Menshikov had upbraided him for making a gift of a few thousand rubles to his aunt Elizabeth, who was seventeen and had no revenue of her own. "You have no right to give away such a sum," Menshikov insisted.

Elizabeth herself laughed at him, playfully. Winsome and graceful, the girl dared pretend that he, Menshikov, who owned ninety-one thousand souls and seven millions of gold rubles, was actually nobody. "Goliath," she whispered, smiling at him.

Menshikov had been given the rank of generalissimo. Elizabeth flirted with the younger officers of the Guard. Peter told the officers of the Guard that they should take orders from nobody but their own commanders. They decided to accept this as the will of the tsar, and Menshikov fell.

Apparently he was merely removed to the management of his estates in the Ukraine, to Mazeppa's city of Baturin. From Moscow he departed with a train of his stately coaches, still possessor of his wealth. Like so many others who had fallen from power, he found that his formal departure, in public view, had nothing to do with his real destination.

Once Menshikov had been removed, the boy Peter discovered that he had no actual need of the generalissimo. After a while Menshikov and his family started the long journey to Siberia, stripped of all possessions. Beyond the frontier their carriage turned back and Menshikov rode on toward the Yenisei in a cart.

On the way out his wife died. Sick and half blind, he lived out his years in a stockaded settlement on the river. No one mocked him or tormented him; he was barely watched by the secret police. There were only two things to occupy him; he

learned to use an ax, and to help in building a new wooden church for the settlement. In this he showed some interest. And his daughter, whom he had meant to be tsaritsa, read aloud to him by candlelight.

Yaghuzinsky did more than that in his exile, hundreds of miles to the east. That gifted brute found his way somehow to the Mongolian frontier, beyond the post of Selenginsk. There he made his presence felt by negotiating on his own responsibility with the Chinese. He even had a treaty drawn in the name of Peter II, by which trade caravans might enter Chinese territory at Kiakhta without paying duty. By that treaty four Russian priests were allowed to dwell in Peking, with six "fledglings" who would learn Chinese—and Yaghuzinsky as overseer of the frontier trade might line his pockets. In his own way, he was carrying out the testament of his dead master.

Moscow was filling with people again. Great families moved back in long caravans of carts to reoccupy their residences in the Kitaigorod, after the Dolgorukys and Galitzins set the example. It was not so easy to move the Senate, the Admiralty, or the War College from Petersburg, so they remained up on the Neva.

The removal began spontaneously, with officers resigning from the armed forces to go home, with the Treasury officials abandoning their efforts to collect the full poll tax, especially on the multitudes of serfs. The military draft no longer attempted to claim peasants needed in field work. Under popular demand the state monopolies of salt (needed for the curing of fish) and tobacco (demanded more and more by workers) were ended. Ships were allowed to enter Archangel and ports other than Petersburg without paying prohibitive tolls. And ordinary people could have their coffins again.

The gatherings along the Moskva River and in the Red Place had almost a festive air. Ukrainians up from the south rejoiced in the prospect of a return to their old way of life, free from the oppression of the Petersburg office known as the Agency for the Ukraine; miners in from the Urals talked openly of better days now that the wars had ended. Listeners

counted the years on their fingers and agreed. *For five years there had been no war.*

Men like Pososhkov appeared from prison cells. One of the Galitzins, going through the jails, had asked if anyone knew why Pososhkov was imprisoned. As no one could, or would, answer, the writer was released.

Merchants came in from the Kazan and Astrakhan fairs to learn how trade was to be channeled. A young man named Kirilov had an idea about that. A city could be built, he argued, in the steppes of mid-Asia, among the Kirghiz and Kalmuks, to revive the continental caravan trade.

Fewer foreigners showed themselves in the Moscow streets, and fewer Russians clad themselves in the German-type wigs, gaiters, and three-cornered hats. The Supreme Secret Council had only one foreigner left in it, Ostermann.

Sight-seers around the Kremlin walls were shown where the bodies of the Streltsi had hung, and told cryptically, "They were hung up like pork and then salted down, but they sent in their bill for it all, at the last."

Festive preparations for the marriage of Peter II occupied the crowds. The tsar, still a boy—fourteen years old—was being prepared for his coronation. Then he died of an infection followed by smallpox. The crowds remained, to watch his funeral.

And the Supreme Secret Council sat through the nights, faced by a great dilemma. Who, and in what way, could govern Russia?

The council itself had only contingent power—to act as guardian authority for the throne. The Senate lay far apart, in half-populated Petersburg. The colleges had sunk into confusion. There was no longer a generalissimo to domineer over them.

As for the family, from which an emperor or an empress had to be conjured—Eudoxia played with her beads and slept in the sun; Elizabeth drove around in her carriage escorted by a bevy of officers. But—and here the secret counselors argued wearily through the night—what *was* Elizabeth? Born before Catherine's "old" wedding to Peter, she was actually no more than any other bastard of his. And she was developing



into an attractive nymphomaniac. The French court would not hear to her marriage with the young Louis.

There was nothing else, except the army, without Peter to control it.

At this point, in January 1730, Peter's family seemed to be extinguished, his city half abandoned. Only the vast land and its outlying peoples remained, little changed because of him.

### *Peter's Changes—the Legend and the Reality*

By then, five years after his death, the common people had formed an idea about Peter. They decided that he had, indeed, been a *changeling*, unlike the tsars of old. Out of the sea itself and out of *German* learning he had drawn gigantic power. Some things he had wrought with that power would endure, and some things would be destroyed. So the millions had come to think. And their concept is very close to the truth.

For by his gigantic hammer strokes Peter had widened cleavages in the land. He had not meant to do this. In doing away with the semireligious seclusion of the elder tsars, he thought to present himself as a human being. Pretense he hated. Yet in enforcing his will he created an autocrat "who does not have to answer for any of his actions to anyone in the world."<sup>2</sup> His father had acknowledged the authority of the Church, and had given weight to the complaints of the people. His father had been both servant and guardian of those people.

Peter lacked his father's sentiment and feeling for individuals in the mass. In mobilizing the peasantry for labor in war and construction, he hardly meant to make them more like inanimate property. When he learned how the peasantry was being sold from owner to owner, he was frightened. The only remedy he suggested was to urge that families be kept together and not sold separately.

His poll tax, logical enough in its plan, resulted in landowners being made responsible, eventually, for the collection of the "head money" from their peasantry. Except for putting a serf to death, the owner had the right to inflict any punishment, to collect the revenues.

Alexis and his "yoke fellows" had worked in the other direction. They had also avoided putting foreigners in the highest posts of the government. Clearly enough, Peter intended to do likewise. His failure became apparent only in the next generation. He tried to change his country into a European monarchy; the latent result was to introduce Europeans into the country.

Within a few years Frederick of Prussia (soon to be known as the Great) wrote of him to Voltaire:

"Lucky circumstances, favorable events, and foreign ignorance have turned the Tsar into a phantom hero. A wise historian, who witnessed part of his life, mercilessly lifts the veil and shows us this Prince as possessing all the faults of man, and few of his virtues. He is no longer that being of universal mind who knows everything and desires to sift all things; he is a man, governed by whims sufficiently novel to give him a certain glamor and to dazzle the onlooker. He is no longer that intrepid warrior who neither feared danger, nor recognized it, but a mean-spirited and timid prince whose very brutality forsook him in seasons of peril—cruel in peace, feeble in war."

Frederick had a caustic pen. Even when fighting his own cowardice, Peter had no mean spirit. Frederick was aware even then of the ignorance of most western Europeans concerning Peter; he had heard the contemporary legends of the great soldier and reformer, the man of destiny perfecting himself to rule a new nation—the legendary "being" that Voltaire himself drew in his Carpenter-of-Saardam concept of Peter.

By the year 1730, when the Supreme Secret Council sat to decide upon some ruler for the nation, this much appeared to remain of what Peter had sought to create.

The army had preserved its strength. It is the paradox of Peter's life that, no soldier himself, he created a standing army so strong that it served as the foundation of the despotism that was to come. The Russians had never before been a warlike people.

His navy never became as strong in performance—except

for the galleys, to which the Russian burlaki took readily enough, being at home on river craft—as in appearance.<sup>3</sup> By 1730 no more than a half-dozen vessels of frigate strength were able to take to the sea.

Of the canals he planned to link together the inland rivers to give access to all the outer seas, only the Volga-Baltic work was completed (known now as the Upper Volga Waterway). Yet this concept of linking the water routes—traversed since the earliest times by portages—has been carried out today. Where Peter worked his flotilla through from the shore of the White Sea to Baltic waters, the Stalin canalway has been completed through Lake Onega to Lake Ladoga and Lenin-grad. The cut between the Don and Volga (joining the Black Sea to the Caspian), that Peter abandoned and then turned into a huge defensive ditch, was scheduled for completion after 1945.

To the creation of the large and up-to-date army, however, Peter had to drive his people with merciless determination. Figures for the last years of the Great Northern War show that desertions exceeded conscriptions very greatly in outlying provinces. In Kazan, where conscription dropped from 20 to 10 per 100, desertion kept on at 37 to 39 per 100. On the lower Don, when 6½ men were drafted, 29 absconded, in the 100.

Official figures give the military strength at the end of his reign as: Guard regiments, 2616; regular army, 210,000; drafts from outer provinces (Ukrainians, Kazan Tatars, etc.) 80,000–109,000; the navy, 27,900 men—48 line-of-battle ships, 787 sloops, galleys, small craft. Population of the central areas diminished by one fifth.

Unofficially, losses among recruits in training were so great that a new type of song was noted, called “Lamentations of the Recruits.” Conscripted peasants, like the labor serfs at Petersburg, often had to find their own food in the forests. At times commanders kept the small amount of money appropriated for rations, letting the peasants subsist on mushrooms and acorn brew. One officer was charged with causing the deaths of hundreds by feeding them toadstools. Whitworth gives the food of the average conscripted peasant as “oatmeal, bread, salt, mushrooms and roots—on great days a

little fish or milk." Such rations did not suffice for Ukrainians or Tatars, accustomed to some milk and meat, barley soup and fruit, in their own districts.

These outer provinces, the old frontiers, were drained of men and resources, to increase the armed force of the central government. In 1724, the year before Peter's death, when Ukrainian leaders were imprisoned in the St. Peter and St. Paul Fortress, the Petersburg authorities took a hundred and forty thousand rubles and forty thousand measures of grain from the Ukraine. And the ten thousand Cossacks who had joined Peter in his Caspian campaign were still kept at work on his new fort in that sea.

So great was the disaffection then in the Ukraine that Michael Galitzin, who held military command there, had under him an occupation army sixty thousand strong. At Peter's death, Galitzin was recalled hastily by Menshikov, who wrote as if the tsar were still living—to avoid the danger of Galitzin joining his army to the Ukrainians in rebellion. ("If they can only gain Galitzin in the Ukraine," the Saxon minister Lefort wrote, "no trouble need be expected; but if they don't, only God knows what will happen.")

Other border peoples, the Kalmuks and the Tatars of the Kazan district, had been called to service in the central army, so reducing the likelihood of a rebellion in those restless areas. Peter said, "A revolt is like a conflagration; it gains power as it expands; when confined, it is harmless as a fire pent within a stone fireplace."

(In the incipient reaction under his grandson Peter II, the burden of the armies upon the outer provinces was lightened; they were no longer quartered upon the towns, with their expenses imposed upon the inhabitants of the areas.)

The underlying purpose of such a heavy armament is not clear at first glance. The Azov expeditions and the Swedish war occasioned it at first. But Poltava decided the outcome of the Swedish war in 1709. After Poltava, however, foreign observers say that the munitions works at Moscow continued to operate, turning out among other weapons an improved lightweight eighteen-pounder cannon. In the dozen years that followed Poltava, while the war went on officially, Peter actu-

ally gave most of his attention to his city; often he would not look at military reports for weeks at a time.

(In a military sense—and an ostensible war must be judged by the criteria of actual warfare—there *was* no Great Northern War of twenty-one years' duration. At sea on the Baltic no meeting engagements of fleets ever took place; the action off Hangö Head was a hit-and-miss affair; the two Russian raids on the Swedish coast amounted to no more than demonstrations, in the judgment of naval authorities. For such an achievement as this the tsar constructed a Baltic fleet of forty to fifty line-of-battle ships, which had to be replaced every seven-odd years owing to the excessive deterioration of the timbers. Very few merchant ships were built.)

Thrice Peter himself tried to arrive at a signed peace in the Baltic zone, once when he began work at Petersburg, again when he and his commanders were confronted by the united Swedish armies moving toward Russia, and again when the Russians were left alone to face the weakened Swedes. But by then Peter had set in motion forces around the Baltic which could not be arrested by a formal peace in the old manner.

The only logical explanation of the twenty-one years' mobilization is that Peter felt the need of it, to aid his maneuvers in the German Baltic, and to guard against revolts, like that planned by Gagarin in the frontier areas, or even at Moscow after the liquidation of the Streltsi. His most dangerous antagonists were always within Russia, not outside.

The illogical explanation is that once Peter had fairly started his European-plan armament, he did not know how to stop it or dispense with it.

For twenty-one years he drew the men and resources of inner Eurasia to array them in one way or another against the western nations. Beyond any doubt, most of the industrial endeavor within the country was begun to meet the needs of the army and navy. The new hospitals appeared mostly along the western front, even at such a small port as Glouhof. To the eastward, they ended at Kazan, a depot for military supplies. The new education in Petersburg started with study of navigation, engineering, and mathematics. Even Leibnitz under-

stood this stress upon military enlightenment, and he prefaced a program of studies with the explanation, "for military affairs and other matters worth knowing."<sup>4</sup>

The other matters worth knowing had to wait. Moscow waited until 1755 for its first university. As with the hospitals, so the factories erected hastily by Menshikov, Shafirov, and others contributed first of all to armament. Three industries made great progress—the arsenals, the cloth factories, and the mines. The cloth works produced uniforms and sailcloth.

These new plants, operated by serfs and usually exploited by the privileged favorites, stifled the native Russian genius for handicraft. Yet the *kustarnaya* or small peasant shop contributed metalwork, nails, and burlap. Peter encouraged skilled woodcarvers and gunsmiths who worked without regard for foreign technique. A peasant who could not learn the Italian process of lacquer making turned out an improved lacquer of his own.

The figureheads of the Baltic ships were beautiful.

As the giant armament, once begun, required more and more to sustain its growth, so Petersburg itself led Peter more and more into the struggle for the Baltic that was to cause incalculable harm to his people. Strahlenberg remarked that in addition to the disadvantages of the site for a city it was easy to attack and difficult to defend.

Peter understood that. The fortification of Kronstadt on the outer island, begun at the very first, was not finished until the end of the wars. Then, to secure the Gulf of Finland, it was necessary to hold Viborg and Revel (Tallinn) or they could have cut off Petersburg from the outer sea. To hold the gulf secure, the outer Aland Islands had to be controlled.

Still that gave the Russians no hold upon the Baltic itself, which continued to be a thoroughfare for Danish and Dutch fleets, not to mention the enigmatic English. Possession of Riga did not help greatly because it lay within a gulf of its own.

Not so much from any will of his own as by the twin riddles of geography and politics, he was drawn into the disputing for the German coast line. In doing so he was thrown closer to

Prussia. After arranging marriage liens upon Mecklenburg, Holstein, and Courland, he held, with Prussia, claim to most of the southern Baltic shore.

Such shadowy tenancy could not remain as it was. In the brief reign of his grandson the Supreme Secret Council took another step along the Baltic by an alliance with Prussia and the first discussion of a three-way partition of declining Poland.

Another step came later.

Except that he had wanted to take the port of Narva in the beginning, and then had thought of building Petersburg, there is no evidence that Peter himself had a clear plan in all this. For too long a time he followed where other minds influenced him. From Gordon and Lefort to Patkul, Menshikov, and Ostermann, not one of them had at stake the ultimate good of Russia. Yet that good had motivated Peter himself.

The shy, mystical, and brutal Peter Alexeivich had been devoted to Russia; to that devotion, never thinking of his own career, he had sacrificed himself. Laboring at small tasks with his hands, he had accomplished miracles. He had strained to see his way toward results but had been unable to do so.<sup>5</sup>

And in the years after his death the efforts that he had made in tune with Russian minds and ways began to yield fruit. What he had done in imitation of foreigners often ceased to be. It vanished in a fashion known only to Slavs, or was changed inexorably into something adapted to the land itself, after a long time. So the conflict between the tsar and his people went on for generations after his death.

"You deigned to ask me," a young student wrote him from abroad, "how did Stephen learn geography when he did not know the alphabet? I do not know. God enlightens even the blind."

That was one of the "fledglings" ordered into Europe to master practical sciences. Yet Peter himself set up an Academy of Science, and stocked it with masters of research from the west, in a country that had neither secondary schools nor universities. Peter being dead, after the first confusion of minds

and languages, the Academy turned German, during the influx of Germans. For a while it remained aloof from the country, except that it was caught in the vortex of politics at Petersburg. In the end it made itself useful in a way favored by the Russians—in exploring and mapping the country with its resources. Men like Müller began to gather the materials of historiography. In his search of the eastern archives Müller came across the report of the Cossack Dezhnev, after Delisle had executed magnificent maps of the seas around Siberia, explored by the Russians themselves.

At Paris Peter had been fascinated at sight by the Gobelin tapestries, and as usual he managed to import specialists in the art, Manrou among them. When they arrived in Petersburg they found no wool in the country suitable for the difficult work. But they helped set up a stocking factory, with the Russians.

The few general schools started by Peter became deserted because they did not teach what the Church taught. (It is estimated that not one tenth of his educational innovations endured.) The imported foreign masters of learning tended to remain within the orbit of the court at Petersburg, where their languages could be understood. Centered so in the Academy, they did introduce the city to intellectual life, but, changing soon from German to French predominance, they served to divorce Petersburg further from the country as a whole.

The architects who put the final touches to the city, like Rastrelli, made it lovelier artistically and more like a second Paris, but not a Russian city.

Throughout the land the folk learned more from the returning soldiers who had dwelt along the Baltic or in Poland than from the new schools. The veterans brought back handiwork that was copied, and they had fresh ideas about the making of old familiar things.

Peter had made a great effort to send sons of the boyars abroad to study, much against their inclination. His hope had been that they would, in turn, teach others at home. Posthumously, something very different happened to this endeavor. The young Russians developed a taste for living in Amsterdam or Venice or Paris. Eventually their families began to visit



such European centers, becoming cosmopolitan as well as educated. This in turn served to separate the high nobility from the lower classes in Russia. Within Russia education was confined for a long time to the noble class, and to military studies.

The rift between the new intellectuals and the people widened. The tens who controlled Russia, and who were growing into hundreds, were drawn toward Europe. They read Molière, listened to Vivaldi's concertos, danced the *polonaise*. They hired Italian musicians for their gardens, and forgot the church chorals of old time.

Not so with the millions, who had seen their art in the ikon painting of the churches, had heard their melodies in the great choruses that rose from a thousand voices, lamenting and giving praise to God. Their literature had been the *bylini*, the tales of the folk about ancient heroes, wizards, bewitched women, and merry merchants. Their sculptors had been the woodcarvers who ornamented windows, boxes, and altar screens.

Out of such things were to come the music of Moussorgsky, the tales of Gogol.

Originally all classes had shared such things. The Cossacks, too, had their legends and their dancers, the Volga burlaki their songs, the Kirghiz cattle tenders their stories of good and bad spirits, the Kalmuks their wild chants.

The churches of old used no instruments but the rise and fall of the human voice—old as the laments of Asia. Yet the village folk had gleaned instruments from the steppe, the pipes and the saddle drums of the nomads, the cymbals of Samarkand. Then, too, they possessed their own one-string fiddles. They never lacked for the dances of harvest time, the dances of maidens circling together with linked arms, or the dances of the *jighits*, the bold young men, before the maidens—the Russian ballet of their time.

The artists of old had built the great gate of Kiev and the great tower of the Kolomenskoe. Such arts as theirs had changed little and because of the desire of the people for them, they were young, and would endure. They were not to

be seen in the Petersburg of 1730. They had retreated into the older dwindling towns and into the steppes.

They were traveling with the people into the new land beyond the Urals, where a million of the folk had gathered by now.

In Petersburg, half deserted by its population—some fifty thousand—the followers of the new court already had forgotten that the Giant Tsar had carved an altar screen out of ivory with his own hands, and had sung in the choir of the Alexander Nevsky Church. For religion was fast going out of fashion along the Nevsky Prospekt.

Between the hundreds tending toward irreligion in the new European fashion and the millions reacting toward the old faith and native Russian ways, there was one small group with independent ideas. They were the young sons of old families who had become devoted to Peter as a man. They were a few of the "fledglings"—so few that they might almost have been counted on the fingers of one hand.

They stood with the peasant-born Pososhkov on the truth apparent to them that not what Peter had *done* but what he had *tried* to do was important for the future of the Russian land. Young Dmitri Galitzin, for instance, realized, after his foreign studies, the mistakes the Giant Tsar was making. Like Pososhkov, Dmitri Galitzin had been given no official recognition during Peter's lifetime. Nor was he admitted into the charmed circle surrounding the Empress Catherine or the boy Peter II. He continued to criticize with cynical honesty.

Basil Tatischev was the most discerning of Peter's protégés. We catch only brief glimpses of him during those restless years. With Ivan Nepluyev, he made the study itinerary from Amsterdam to Venetian shipyards, and to service in Mediterranean fleets—to satisfy Peter. But both of them, with all the versatility of Slavs, mastered much more than the way of a ship upon the sea. Tatischev especially dug into what mattered most, beneath the formality and the rote learning of the Europeans. Both the youngsters had caught from Peter a sense of a mission to be performed.

Accompanying Peter on the Pruth campaign, Tatischev ex-

plored the unknown region for archaeological traces of the early Slavs; on the Caspian expedition he brought along a manuscript to read to his master—a new editing of the ancient *Chronicle of Murom* that he had made himself. Sent to the Urals in those last years to determine the actual capacity of the new mines, he came back with a report on the amount of copper available. In the Baltic conferences he acted as a check on those too expert foreigners, Ostermann and Bruce.

These few youngsters would have been more truly “makers of the reign” than the great favorites, if they had had the opportunity. Like Peter, they made themselves servants of a Russia-to-be. They did not have the power to endure at court. Tatischev was exiled.

Nepluyev—who had been urged once by Peter to eat some of the carrot pie of a Russian peasant, “lest our man be offended”—rendered invaluable service as ambassador at Constantinople while Peter was trying to invade the Caucasus. It is said that when Peter told him of his appointment to that most critical post, Nepluyev fell on his knees in gratitude, and Peter said, “Don’t kneel. If you render good service, you will have no need to kneel again to anyone.”

It was Peter’s real bequest to his people that he taught them by example how to work as individuals for something beyond themselves.

When Nepluyev heard of the death of the tsar, grieving inconsolably, he said, “He taught us to know ourselves as human beings.”

### *End of the Dynasty*

It is odd that Peter II should have died in the house of Lefort, built by his grandfather for jolly entertainment. And there, that night, the male line of the Romanovs died also—the dynasty of Michael, of Alexis, the gentle tsar, of Peter his son, and now the tired, bewildered boy who kept talking about the animals he had hunted, until he could talk no more.

Ostermann, the shrewdest of Peter’s favorites, sat with this shadow of a boy until the last. Ostermann, son of a Westphalian pastor, had known poverty and had sat too long in the

counsels of the great not to realize disaster when he met with it. Only he and the drunken Gabriel (friend Golovin of Siberia) and the graceless Yaghuzinsky survived of "the makers of the reign." Gabriel counted for nothing, except that he was a Russian, while Yaghuzinsky no longer had any friends.

There was no one to carry on the dynasty; there was no longer a rule that could be enforced, unless a military dictatorship—and who would head that? Peter himself had compelled his people to swear obedience to an emperor or empress unknown. . . . When the boy Peter ceased to breath, Ostermann rose heavily, because he had grown stout with prosperity. Avoiding the chamber where the Supreme Secret Council sat, he refused to join the others and took to his bed, complaining of a most sudden attack of gout but suffering instead from too acute an awareness of the futility of the session of the council.

Without him, only Galitzins and Dolgorukys sat in wearied argument, knowing that within a few hours the multitudes in Moscow would demand the name of a successor to the boy who had died.

These heads of great families nursed some very unpleasant memories of their own desperate expedients and wild ideas—of wrangling over hurrying through Peter's marriage to a niece of the Field Marshal Dolgoruky—of hoping the girl might be smuggled in and impregnated in the boy's bed before he became too weak—of wakening the seventeen-year-old Elizabeth, his aunt, and trying to wean her away from her officer lovers to play the part of the empress.

One of them had forged well enough a proclamation by Peter II naming their niece, his betrothed, as empress. But when the moment came to go out before the public assembly with the forgery, they did not stir. It could not be done.

Outside, in Moscow, waited the high nobility, the clergy, the *schlachta*—the officers of service—and the Guards who had served the Romanovs. One whisper of deceit and the Guards would use their sabers.

The people in Moscow waited for a name. And a name had to be presented to them, a familiar name.

In Russia there was no longer such a name. Outside Russia

only one remained. A daughter of the imbecile Ivan survived, as Anna Ivanovna, widowed Duchess of Courland. Her husband—to whom the Giant Tsar had betrothed her—had died and Anna Ivanovna herself had not been seen in the land for twenty years. Still, the people knew she had been the daughter of a Romanov who had worn the ancient shapka.

That night cynical Dmitri Galitzin made his plea to Their Sublimities of the council (who were largely his own kinsmen). He saw in the impasse his opportunity to try for a new government. And in the end he convinced the others. After Menshikov, he pointed out, the people would accept no generalissimo; nor would the jealous aristocrats accept the regency of either the Galitzin or Dolgoruky family.

Galitzin pleaded with them to let the dead past bury its dead and to face boldly to the future.

The way was open for an enlightened government, like the English, like the Swedish—a limited monarchy in which Anna Ivanovna could hold the throne only by guaranteeing freedom to all classes of her people. She would govern through a new council, a Privy Council, larger than the old one; she could not of her own will declare peace or war, impose new taxes, give away or take state land, or condemn a subject to death. There were other things which she should not do, as tsaritsa. And if she violated one clause of her agreement with the council, she would cease to be tsaritsa.

This, then, meant that Russia would become a monarchical republic, like Poland, dominated by no individual or family.

When the papers were drawn, the bedridden Ostermann complained that his gout made it impossible for him to sign them. When Dmitri Galitzin insisted that he do so, Ostermann wrote his name in such a way that it could not be read.

A deputation hurried to Mitau in Courland with the invitation and the agreement. It seemed to Galitzin and the others—but not to Ostermann—that a woman like Anna Ivanovna, pent up so long in a small Baltic court, might agree to the conditions, to seat herself on the throne of Russia; and that then the republican government could be made to function.

Somehow in Moscow, where he had appeared for the wedding, Yaghuzinsky heard of Galitzin's conditions, and sent a

courier of his own, disguised, to Mitau with a note advising against signing the agreement, because the people would never accept the ideas of the aristocrats.

However, the Duchess of Courland signed the agreement of the limited monarchy. Yaghuzinsky's courier was caught returning, and tortured until he confessed who had sent him. The former prosecutor was imprisoned.

In the Moscow palace where Sophia had turned upon the monks of the Streltsi, where Galitzin's new republic was to be launched, he read the name of the empress-to-be to the gathering of the land. They cried approval at the name, the officers of the Generalitet (General Staff), the heads of the Synod, the presidents of the colleges, and the fathers of the great families.

But when he read aloud the conditions of the agreement that would limit the monarchy, there was utter silence. No listener would approve or be the first to protest. "Those who heard the letter," the Archbishop Feofan Prokopovich reported, "trembled in their limbs. Even those who had hoped much from this assembly lowered their ears like poor asses. There was a whispering and a murmur, but no one dared speak out."

In spite of their new titles these listeners held to old hopes and fears. They murmured, "What good if eight noblemen rule instead of one tsar . . . who then would be guardian of the people?"

They wanted a Great Master, to become again the guardian of the people. Galitzin's sudden proposal they took to be the recreation of the Supreme Secret Council under a new name—and there had been so many new names.

Within a few hours the murmuring in the assembly had passed outward into the streets. When the champions of a new republic increased the guards around the Kremlin, the argumentation also increased. The foreign ambassadors began to write hurried dispatches: "The Russians debate about an English parliament . . . they want freedom, but they do not know what kind of freedom . . . they seem to be on the verge of a revolt."

In the few days before the arrival of the empress-elect this

murmuring of the Slavs became articulate in the words, "Let there be again the rule of the ancient tsardom."

The issue was decided very quickly, against the Dolgorukys and Galitzins. They tried at first to keep the duchesses secluded—Anna Ivanovna's cousin of Mecklenburg arrived with her—but Ostermann and the imperialists got messages through to her, until she understood that she could reject the signed conditions boldly and be safe. When she contrived a face-to-face meeting between Dmitri Galitzin's group and his antagonists, she asked bluntly, "What is the truth? Were the conditions sent me the will of the whole nation or not?"

So Anna Ivanovna tore up the conditions, and, pretending anxiety at evidence of a conspiracy, placed herself under the protection of the Guards—declaring that only orders issued through the commander of the Guards were to be obeyed. She also took possession of the imperial regalia designed for Catherine, being prompted thereto by her sister of Mecklenburg.

This *volte-face* within the palace seemed unreal as a scene upon a stage, but Dmitri Galitzin had no doubt of its reality. "The feast was prepared," he observed bitterly, "but the guests would not come to it. I know what a price I shall have to pay for it. But one day those who make me pay will have an account of their own to settle."

As usual, the cynic was a true prophet. In appearance and in mind Anna Ivanovna was uncompromising and masculine. Disliked by those close to her in her girlhood, she had learned how to inflict her will on others, and to inflict pain.

Very soon the court returned to Petersburg, where it was safely removed from contact with the people at large. There she placed reliance at first only in the consummate Ostermann, in Yaghuzinsky—released from his cell by virtue of the timely advice he had sent to Mitau—and the Guards.

She was thirty-seven, she had twenty years of neglect to make up for, and the Dmitri Galitzin coup filled her with an abiding distrust of Russians. At the same time she felt secure with the Baltic Germans who could have no other incentive than to strengthen the instruments of her rule.

To increase the revenues, the old wartime taxation was enforced again. To enforce the central authority within all the

provinces, the military establishment was brought up to strength, and a Cadet Corps was formed at Petersburg, under German tuition. To keep informed of subversive activities, the old Prikaz of Secret Affairs reappeared under the name of the Court of the Secret Police. It was almost as if Petersburg fortified itself against the restive hinterland. The French ambassador wrote from Petersburg, "No one here dares murmur against the will of the Empress. The evil-minded have so entirely been put out of the way that now you can hardly find a trace of the Russians whose antagonism is to be feared."

Those leaders of the Slav nobility, the Dolgorukys and Galitzins, were at first dismissed to their estates, then got rid of effectively—two being beheaded, two (who happened to be field marshals) dying in prison, while one was broken on the wheel and others took the long road to Siberia under guard.

With German thoroughness, informed by the newly quickened "tongues," the most powerful Slav families were intimidated. One daughter was accused of sorcery; Dmitri Galitzin was convicted of dealings with the devil, condemned and then stripped of his possessions and immured in Schlüsselburg (the fortress at the Neva's end captured by Peter and Sheremet'ev). Even the editor of *Peter the Tsar, Cornerstone of the Faith* was sought out and locked up—his book had calumniated Lutheranism.

Political exiles went to Siberia at the rate of two thousand a year, four times the number exiled before Peter's day.

So the German Baltic came to rule Peter's city, for a dozen years.

### *Age of Biron*

It was efficient, in its blind methodical manner; it taught the wayward Russians the qualities they lacked in the hard school of experience. And as usual the Russians soon had a word for it. As *Tatarshtchina* had been the Age of the Tatars, this became known among them as *Bironovshtchina*, the Age of Biron.

Like Sophia before her, the truculent Anna Ivanovna doted on one man, Bieren (Biron to the Russians). A very common-



place German with a family of his own, he had accomplished nothing at all until Anna lifted him to her side, making him among other things a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. Biron had a remarkable disregard of human beings, except those he favored, and an equally remarkable love for horses—a peculiarity that did not escape the Russian observers. “He treats men like horses,” they summed him up, “and horses like men.”

Under Anna’s imperious domination, those same Russians had to bow to the plump Biron’s wishes—“You Russians,” he called them—as to the will of a *Veliki Gosudar*. Since Biron took pleasure in radiant colors around him, even the heads of old boyar families like Vasily Cherkasky came to court in pink and saffron coats. Anna, too, demanded glitter and luxury. The Italian ambassador said he had been in many courts but none so heavily clad in silver, gold, and precious stones.

Like Catherine, the dour Anna thirsted for the appearance of grandeur. At her few banquets she sat under a canopy with her sister Duchess of Mecklenburg.

Manstein, the adjutant of the new field marshal, Münnich, explains how amusing it was to behold such tailored richness joined to Tatarlike slovenness: “a gorgeous coat with an ill-combed wig above it . . . a guest beautifully clad arriving in a shabby coach . . . the ladies with marvelous dresses and no taste.”

There were German operas, Italian intermezzo singers. There were zoos of wild animals for Anna Ivanovna to shoot with her musket as they were driven by through the gardens; other fowling pieces were kept in the corners of the chambers at Peterhof or the Summer Palace, so that Anna could shoot at birds out the windows. Killing gave her brief, minute satisfaction.

She held to a routine as regular as the palace clocks, going from the billiard table to faro, to light meals without drink, and to bed on the stroke of eleven. Strangely, she would never take money she won at gambling, but it gave her deep satisfaction to drain the revenues of her vast empire into the display of her court.

Biron amused himself with a riding academy.

In Anna's amusements there was a method. She cherished a troupe of dwarfs who sometimes used knives on those who displeased her. Among her jesters she placed young people of great families—Galitzins, Volkonskys, Balakevs. One Galitzin she wedded to a Kalmuk woman named "Porkess"; two Russian girls she ordered to become hens, sitting in baskets and eating bread balls tossed to them.

In the troupe of jesters an idiot took to running before her, at her coming, crying, "*Ding-dong—ding-dong*—here comes Ivan the Terrible."

Ostermann managed brilliantly; he had become a match for Campredon, the French ambassador; Münnich forged through the Ukraine and down to the Black Sea with his disciplined columns; he broke Turkish armies along the Pruth where Peter had retreated. A new regiment, the Ismailov, was added to the Imperial Guards, new Horse Guards to the always inept cavalry. Throughout the country tax arrears were collected efficiently, by confiscation of cattle and goods. The survey of the Academy located new minerals. New secondary schools stemming out from Petersburg taught jurisprudence, heraldry, the art of fortification, artillery ballistics, geography, and German history—not Russian.

Out in the Urals Tatischev had been traveling and ransacking archives in a mad kind of search to get together some rough materials for the history of the Slavs, because he did not believe the dictate of the German masters of learning as to the origin of the Slavs. He had come to believe also that history could be interpreted, not merely set down as a series of events with their dates. When he brought his pile of manuscript pages crudely written to the Academy, it was frowned upon and Tatischev was told to revise it according to proper method. He died before he could or would do that, and most of his manuscript was lost in a fire. . . . Lomonosov, haunting the taverns of Petersburg, also had a conviction that the different sciences were not actually compartmented studies, to be learned each for itself, but were related to each other. "He is a genius," said Euler, the head of the mathematicians at the Academy, but the other members would have none of Lo-

monosov, who wrote bad verses and thought you could translate Ovid into simple Russian words. For a time he disappeared and came back with a writing about small boats thrusting through ice under the fires of the northern sky, which he called a *Memoir of an Arctic Expedition*. There was no place, then, for the young Slavs in Peter's Academy.

Anna gave a ball in which the natives of the land appeared for the amusement of her guests—Samoyeds and Tungusi and Ostiaks in their fur and fishkin jackets. This ball she excelled with an ice festival, which was also the wedding of one of her fools. For the bridal couple a miniature palace was built of ice, even to the cannon at the gate, which fired without bursting, and the bridal bed itself. As for the procession, it was drawn in sleighs by reindeer and dogs, and oxen and swine . . . in that palace and on that bed of ice the bride and bridegroom were forced to spend the night.

Dying, Anna Ivanovna whispered to Biron, "Never be afraid." That night and for many days to come Ostermann had one of his self-diagnosed attacks of gout that prevented him from speaking, or writing any messages. For Anna Ivanovna had signed a decree by which Biron was to be Regent of Russia.

Even Ostermann and Münnich were baffled by this new impasse. Because Biron was not hated so much as he was detested by all within sight and sound of Petersburg, including themselves. He was simply a human clod, incapable of realizing even the danger in which he stood now that the will of the dead tsaritsa had named him Regent of All the Russias.

Perhaps no man in their regime had been so hated as the Russian Voluinsky (who had accomplished with Shafirov the ransoming of Peter's army at the Pruth, and had prepared the way for the march into Persia that failed), because Voluinsky had amassed a fortune like Menshikov's in open mockery of law and human life. Voluinsky had tried to overthrow Ostermann, and had been broken and exiled in his turn. Yet Voluinsky had mocked Biron and for that reason the people at large held him to be a martyr.

Still the German colony in Petersburg realized very clearly that their only security now lay in the circumstance that the

dead woman who appointed Biron had been tsaritsa. "Without Biron," they admitted among themselves, "we are lost."

### *End of the Germans*

Münnich, a brilliant soldier, decided that inaction was the worst of bad alternatives. Contriving the semblance of a palace revolution, he led eighty Guard officers into Biron's bedroom at night, to start him away to exile. A house was being prepared for him in a place called Pelim, Münnich explained—a comfortable house with a good stable of riding horses and well-trained lackeys. To that house, some distance away, Biron could take the duchess his wife and their children, in a first-rate coach. It would be quite a long journey because the house was in Siberia.

Biron did not understand. It seemed to him to be a monstrous bad joke that his chief of staff should wake him up to tell him about a house in Siberia. And, while his wife screamed and clung to him in her nightgown, he tried to resist. Between his bed and the door his officer captors managed to give him twenty small and painful wounds. . . .

When the news came to the barracks of the Transfiguration Guards that night, the officers dressed hastily and spontaneously took oath to Elizabeth, daughter of Peter, the hard-drinking and hard-riding woman, still young, who seemed to them to be the one available tsaritsa. When their Elizabeth had passed their gate in her sleigh, they had run out to jump on the rear runners and whisper in her ear. She was their "Lady Commander of the Guards" and if she did not have any book learning, she knew the way to make love.

But it appeared next day that Münnich, Ostermann, and the greater portion of the army officers supported the remaining Germans.

It made little difference who or what occupied the palaces in Petersburg by then. The country outside heard only names that shifted in kaleidoscopic fashion—duchesses of Brunswick and Brunswick-Bevern, a year-old child christened Ivan VI, a Prince Anton of Brunswick-Bevern, and his mistress, another

Anna—she of Mecklenburg, too indolent to dress herself or to heed Ostermann's warning that she must get rid of Elizabeth, the surviving daughter of Peter. Her Saxon lover appeared in public for her.

In gardens and stove-heated drawing rooms these Germans fought each other, more indolently than Peter's favorites had torn each other down. Münnich resigned his post in disgust.

The reaction of the land had been gathering force for years. Only the circumstance that the palaces lay in Petersburg, out of observation, as it were, had kept the Germans installed for so long. The Court of the Secret Police had full information about that.

Old Believers had preached against the "woman like the many-headed dragon of the Apocalypse" and "Biron, the accursed German." New proverbs appeared at crossroads: "If a woman governs a city, it will not endure." And, "Walls built by a woman are never high."

Münnich won his victories without stirring popular rejoicing. His army devastated the once dreaded peninsula of the Krim Tatars, sacking the palace of Bagche Serai, the last stronghold of the khans. But the army limped back, wounded. . . . It won its way into Danzig, during the new Polish war, and then had to retreat, with too many losses. The people were aware only of the conscriptions and the deaths.

It did not seem to them to be any improvement, that tax collectors took their cattle, to add to the state revenues. They laid it all up against the "Germans who debase us with novelties and grind down the poor with oppression."

A song was heard in the villages. It called for the tomb of the Giant Tsar to open and for him to come forth, against the accursed Germans. Even his merciless hand was better than the oppression of the distant palaces. In Petersburg—and in Moscow and Viborg—conflagrations started and burned mysteriously without being extinguished. This was a sign not to be mistaken by the informers of the Court of the Secret Police, because so many conflagrations could not start by accident, and follow so fast.

In the snowbound night of December 6, 1741, the tall and handsome lover of men, Elizabeth Petrovna, went in her sleigh

to the barrack of the Transfiguration Guards. Only her physician and her companion of the moment, one of the Vorontsovs, attended her.

The officers gathered around her.

"My children," she said to them, "you know whose daughter I am."

"Little Mother," they answered, "we know."

"I swear to die for you. Will you swear to die for me?"

They took the oath, to Elizabeth as tsaritsa.

Among the exiles to Siberia went Ostermann, the last of Peter's makers of the reign.

### *The Bronze Horseman and the New Land*

When Elizabeth Petrovna was crowned, Lomonosov wrote, exulting, "Now with Astraea comes again the age of gold."

The age that came, for twenty years, was one of relaxation within Petersburg, of the liberation of the Russian nobility, of unlimited wealth flowing in, of French fashions instead of German. For Elizabeth had a French physician, and found the easy manners of that nation much to her liking. She ordered her dresses from Paris and would not wear the same dress twice or pay for them. If a chimney smoked or the walls around her turned moldy from damp, she did not care, but she spent a year's revenue in embellishing her new Winter Palace.

A young Russian from the eastern settlements complained of the disorder he saw in the city.

"Disorder?" observed Delisle de la Croyère. "Too much order is not a good thing."

In this gilded age no one suffered the death penalty; torture was frowned upon. The dwarfs, banished from the palaces, were seen no more. Elizabeth liked to see able-bodied men around her, and she married secretly a Ukrainian giant whom she had heard singing in the church choir.

Yet she had a temper, and a latent savagery. At one of her balls, where they danced the minuet, she noticed a Madame Lopukhin, fairer than herself, educated and covertly contemptuous. This Lopukhin had dressed her hair like Elizabeth's, and adorned it with a similar red rose. The empress

made the woman kneel before her, while she cut off the other's rose with the hair around it and slapped her face. . . . When she heard that Madame Lopukhin had disparaged her to the Austrian ambassador, Elizabeth ordered the noblewoman knouted. Stripped of clothing to her hips, she was lashed until the raw flesh, burned with hot embers, would make a mockery of her beauty. There was some talk at the time of a conspiracy to give foreign support to the child Ivan. Much more was made of this supposed plot, later, to explain the exile of the Lopukhin family. Ivan himself was sent away to Archangel, either to lend substance to the talk of the plot, or to safeguard him from Elizabeth's anger. She herself had no children.

Like her father, she lived restlessly, moving about as the whim seized her, holding fetes in the forest, demanding that her courtiers be clothed as at Versailles. When she was inclined to hear ballads sung by Locatelli's Italians, she sent out her lackeys to round up spectators, not caring who they were. More than that, when she heard of a merchant in Yaroslavl who staged and directed an opera company of his own—imitating the Germans who had been in Petersburg—she sent for him to perform before her, and allowed him to build an opera house of his own. Later in Moscow, Sumarokov excelled the pioneer company, performing, with the fashionable French pieces, a story of the Slavs—*The False Dmitri*. By then, at long last, Moscow had its first university, much disparaged by the foreigners of the Academy of Sciences.

Of such things Elizabeth Petrovna had little understanding. Yet like Peter she had a loyalty to the *something* that was Russia. It took twenty thousand horses, they say, to move her and her court to Moscow, but to Moscow she went, and to Kiev to visit the church where her lover-husband had sung in his youth. Although, like her, he had no schooling, she appointed him field marshal and Prince of the Holy Roman Empire—making his brother hetman of the Ukraine, bestowing on him the sword and charter of privileges that the Cossacks had possessed before the time of Mazeppa and Peter.

It was a nice gesture and Elizabeth was in almost every way a kindly woman. "Do as you like," she told people who both-

ered her about legislation. Petersburg began to fill up with population; Rastrelli designed public buildings in the neo-classical style; over the entrance of the Winter Palace they placed the naval crown and wings of a fleet that, somehow, did not seem to exist.

Ministers with portfolios and urgent problems on their minds had trouble catching the elusive Elizabeth for a moment of serious talk; when she went out she was apt to be hurrying to a festival or riding meet, or most frequently to a review at an army camp. Documents accumulated, unsigned, on her work desk. The documents had been prepared by the old Senate, revived, or by ministers whose tasks never seemed to be done.

Her ministers used to put a map of Europe on her desk, hoping she might become interested in it, but Elizabeth never cared to master its geography.

In these years of festivity in Petersburg, the cleavage between it and the hinterland was widening.

Beyond the gates of Petersburg and Moscow, out of sight of the guard posts, the roads belonged to those who could hold them. Armed bands of deserters took toll of merchants, or fled themselves from pursuit. Where ferries crossed the rivers, masterless men took toll that was never ordained by the Senate. Down the Volga drifted ships that preyed on government craft. On these nameless craft tales were told of a second Stenka Razin, a king of the river thieves, Vanka Kayin.

When rafts drifted down the Volga bearing crosses on which the bodies of thieves hung from hooks, while the bell on the cross clanged with the motion of the water, people who watched them said that Vanka Kayin would never be caught.

Because a law had been passed in Petersburg that the mosques of the Volga shores were to be turned into churches, the Mordvas and Chuvashes rebelled from authority and left their villages to retreat into the plains.

Beyond the Volga, Kirilov's new city had been built and fortified, where the Ural River touches the Samara. Kirilov had no thought of reaching India by the rivers; he thought that order could be brought into the wilderness, at the foot of



the Ural Mountains, between the Baraba Steppe and the Volga.

His city of Orenburg was the first of its kind, thrust into Kirghiz territory near the lands cultivated by the Baraba settlers. His work had been taken over by another disciple of Peter, Nepluyev, who built a chain of blockhouses along the Samara to the Volga, to protect the colonists. They were not able to penetrate the dry steppes to reach the shore of the Aral inland sea, or Bokhara or Samarkand, as Kirilov had longed to do.

Along the dry steppes the nomad peoples were astir again, under the impulse of a second Tamerlane. From the heights of the Caucasus where Peter had marched in the dust, to the mountain passes of India, Nadir Shah ruled with a power that could not be challenged.

Far to the east the expedition of Vitus Bering was making its way patiently, year by year, to search the waters lying between Russia and Japan and America, to learn what land might be available there, as Peter had wished. Bering's first attempt had labored through a rising on Kamchatka, to build a vessel that wandered blindly through mists, meeting only boats of the native Chukchi.

Now with the Great Expedition he was exploring his own route, determined to bring back observations and maps verified beyond doubt. Beside the Russian Andrei Chirikov, who had become a skilled navigator of the Arctic, Bering had with him Louis Delisle de la Croyère and two naturalists, the German Gmelin and the war veteran Steller, who were plotting the animal and plant life as they went—as Müller was searching the archives of the posts. For the first time a scientific expedition was exploring the unknown portion of Eurasia, so that the Academy and Petersburg itself could understand what lay beyond the mines of the Urals.

Their voyage would take them to the tip of America.

It would also reveal the nature of a land where human beings developed in settlements built according to their needs. Those human beings now numbered a million. They had sur-

vived almost out of touch with European culture. They had existed on the rivers and by hunting at first, developing agriculture very slowly, in primitive fashion. They had fused themselves with other peoples. European warfare was not known to them. They had schooled themselves in primitive fashion, and had built their own churches, practicing religion as they knew it.

Out of the stream of their migration, diverted into colonies, they had developed a different Russia. Beyond sight of the outer seas, they had mastered a continent in a way that would endure.

There was no force that could destroy them, in their hold upon the land, because they had been subjected to every evil already.

In the far west Petersburg, soon to be called St. Petersburg after the new fashion, took another step outward, since it had made Courland a protectorate. And a very slight step north, into Finland, beyond Ladoga in a small war.

Beyond Courland in that moment of historical time the military state of Prussia was expanding its man power, designing to take over a portion of Poland.

Bestuzhev, the Russian chancellor, held fast to a policy, under those conditions, of alliance with Vienna, and resistance to Berlin, the capital of Prussia.

Elizabeth herself disliked Frederick of Prussia, who had sponsored the marriage of the last male Romanov, christened Peter, off in Holstein with a girl brought up in Prussian fashion, Sophia of Anhalt.

Frederick, she knew, behaved with careful courtesy to Russians and termed them in private "barbarians."

"He is a bad prince," she told the English ambassador, "who has no fear of God. He ridicules holy matters, and does not go to church. He is the Nadir Shah of Prussia."

She was ill then, in 1756, hating the thought of death, and bothered as always by politics. She understood how the Russians around her feared the army of Prussia, their former ally. And England, still holding scornful mastery of the seas, acted as Frederick's friend. Since Frederick undoubtedly meant to

possess Courland, it seemed necessary, her advisers believed, "to reduce the numbers of the Prussian army."

In the Seven Years' War that followed the Russian armies took part. There was a grim defeat, almost like Narva, at the hands of Frederick. Then after years a slow advance through East Prussia, to Frankfort and the Oder. And another battle, Künersdorf, almost like Poltava, because the numbers and steadfast courage of the Russian soldiers crushed Frederick's last strong field army. Elizabeth, however, refused to hear of peace until they had managed to "reduce the numbers of the Prussians."

In 1760 the Russian armies entered Berlin and stripped it of its war material.

After that all Europe recognized that Russia had become a great power, and that its army must be reckoned with in the future. The next year Elizabeth Petrovna died.

Peter had won his fight, with foreign powers and his own people, for his city.

But the fate of that city he had not foreseen.

A year after the burial of his daughter Elizabeth, a German dynasty took control of the city. The half-imbecile Peter III, who had come to the throne from Holstein-Gottorp, was dethroned by the Transfiguration Guards, the actual rulers of the country, on behalf of the army. Escorted to his country estate with his dogs and Prussian lackeys, this Peter was then made to die conveniently, as Alexis, the heir of the Giant Tsar, had been made to die. The young Ivan VI was also eliminated.

The Guards then crowned, in place of those male remnants of the Romanovs, a young woman as personable as Elizabeth but much more ambitious. She was Sophia Augusta Frederica, daughter of the Lutheran Prince of Anhalt-Zerbst, a Prussian general.

While Sophia had been brought up in a small Prussian court, she had mastered French culture to aid her in her self-appointed mission to become Tsaritsa of Russia. She had no religion, and the parade of her lover-favorites far exceeded Elizabeth's. In Russia she had been christened Catherine Alexievna, like the first peasant-born Catherine. She is better

known as Catherine II, or the Great. Because, like Peter, this shrewd German woman made herself autocrat of All the Russias.

In her time St. Petersburg became no more than a European court, divorced entirely from the core of the Russian land. The Russian religion became secularized. By imperial ukaz, the Russian nobility was released from the obligation of life-long service that Peter had imposed on it.

In her most imposing victory parade, arranged by her favorite Potemkin, Catherine journeyed down into the Crimea to have placed in her hand a sceptre that symbolized the vanished rule of the Krim khans.

In 1770 the French sculptor Falconet, assisted by Marie Collot, wrought in bronze the equestrian statue of Peter the Great, by the Neva's bank, with his hand pointing to the west. His body wore a European uniform, which all the tsars after him would wear.

In 1772 the northeastern portion of Poland fell to Russia in the first partition of that nation.

In the outer lands, the Ukraine was fully subjected to the city, the Zaporogian Cossacks liquidated; Siberia became more a penal colony, its mines more productive—those at Nerchinsk, where Golovin had made the first treaty with China, were possessed by the new imperial dynasty. Yakutsk was given a penal prison for women, as well as the one for men.

Catherine reigned from 1762. Ten years later came the reaction of the land. The Kalmuks who had aided Peter migrated away from Russian authority, eastward to China. The Ural frontier rose in rebellion under the Cossack Pugachev in 1774. This revolt of the Bashkirs, the peasants, and the eastern peoples blotted out the defense line of the Tsaritsyn Canal, and besieged Orenburg. Pugachev, claiming to be the dead Peter III, fought for the abolition of serfdom, the return of the old religion. The rebellion drew its munitions from the Ural smelters, at which Swedish prisoners had worked under Peter.

The ships of Russian traders, following the routes explored by Bering's Great Expedition, reached Unalaska and Kodiak,

the outposts of the new continent where on the eastern seaboard the first Continental Congress of Americans sat.

The Pugachev rebellion failed, and the continental Eurasia was more fully dominated by the new Russian army. Yet the hinterland beyond the Volga, born of rebellion and taking its course slowly as a glacier moves, through migration to new colonization, and settlement, endured that blow as it had endured other ordeals.

It survived with slowly mounting strength, while St. Petersburg became Petrograd, and then Leningrad, torn by war.

## AFTERWORD

### *The Different Judgments of Peter*

PETER ALEXEIVICH has become without question the most controversial figure in Russian history. At the same time he has become one of the most obscured figures in European history. With the passage of time, the controversy has heightened rather than diminished. Perhaps no other strong man in history has gained so many champions and so many critics so long after his death.

There is a good reason for this cleavage in judgment, which is bound to continue for a long time to come. The judgments have varied as time brought changes in ideas.

In Peter's own day, a Russian could curse "that ogre feeding upon his people," and the English envoy extraordinary, Lord Whitworth, could say in rather formal eulogy, "Peter tamed his savages, raised cities, invited arts, converted forests into fleets."

A little later an orator, Platon, stepped down from the altar space of the St. Peter and St. Paul cathedral, to strike his hand dramatically upon the tomb of the Giant Tsar, invoking him: "Come forth, to behold thy fleet today." And one Russian whispered to another, "Better not—think what would happen to us!"

The first verdict of foreign observers—of those who spoke their minds—was hostile to the impetuous tsar, as with William III, Bishop Burnet, and somewhat later, Frederick of Prussia. They had seen a man who, as Kliuchevsky puts it, "managed to combine in himself lack of judgment, moral lapses of all kinds, and wide technical skill . . . a good carpenter rather than . . . a good sovereign."

This disparaging verdict was strengthened quite naturally by the publication in Vienna of the journal of Johann Korb, with its details of the ordeal of the Streletsi. From then on Peter Alexeivich began to appear in literature and court gossip as monstrous, or noble and enlightened—these two very different Peters taking turn about, with changes in cultural or political concepts, like the automata of a Swiss weather gauge, one smiling and gay to herald fine weather, the other dark and scowling before a storm.

In Russia itself the reaction after his death brought first of all a passionate longing for the old ways and beliefs. This reaction continued, although it lessened, through the twenty years of the reign of his daughter Elizabeth. Yet Elizabeth and her court paid full tribute to the memory of the Giant Tsar—even supplying Voltaire with carefully edited material for writing a sketch of his life. Obviously, at this point, the Russians themselves began to have a very different concept of Peter than the western Europeans, who depended more on literary tradition.

Under Catherine and the oligarchy—the Germanophile, Junkerlike aristocracy—Peter's memory returned to full favor. Voltaire's praise of Catherine's regime and reasoned adulation (the humble Carpenter of Saardam concept) of Peter helped restore him, if not as the Man of Destiny, at least as the Bronze Horseman-and-peasant-monarch blended in some fashion known only to the minds of the costumed shepherds of Versailles. Popular opinion within Russia did not agree.

After the French Revolution Peter's memory suffered another change. European intellectuals then had a horror of revolt. Peter had been a revolutionist. He had created "a nation of officials, laborers, and soldiers, a land filled with camps and factories."

After Napoleon, Peter acquired new attributes, or rather old ones brought out anew. Obviously he, also, had been a Man of Destiny—on the whole more creative than Napoleon, the soldier-opportunist. (Also the Russians had made Napoleon retreat from Moscow.)

In the curious afterglow of the Napoleonic wars, in the atmosphere of banners and tombs and mild intellectual revolution, Peter Alexeivich resumed stature as a benevolent mon-

arch. Pushkin, in his love for St. Petersburg rather than for Peter, wrote his emotional tributes (*Poltava*, *The Bronze Horseman*, *The Negro of Peter the Great*). The All-Knowing Monarch emerged in mystical guise. Peter was being judged emotionally.

This continued to be the case throughout the nineteenth century during the Carlylesque vogue of the full-scale portraits of great men. (Even at the turn of the century so careful a biographer as R. Nisbet Bain, accurate with his detail, could speak of "one of the very greatest of great men . . ." and of the people as "the Muscovite people, whom it was his mission to reform against their will." So Peter was portrayed in the west as the "Great Reformer.")

Among Russian historians that was not the case (unless with Ustrayalov and Karamzin). Sergei Solov'ev, almost the first to trace out the migration of the eastern Slavs as a people subjected to the unceasing impact of the racial groups of Asia, saw in Peter a ruler who tried to serve his state, not his people. That state Solov'ev portrayed as a rudimentary service state centered in Moscow, aided or injured by its varying governments—a people contending with geography itself in a long-enduring struggle to better the conditions of their *land*. To Solov'ev, Peter is very human, an artisan of hasty changes that did not benefit his people in their natural course of development.

At this point Kliuchevsky observes that those who debate Peter are actually debating Russia itself. There were in Kliuchevsky's time two schools of thought among the Russians—the "Westerners," who argued that progress could only come from the adoption of western European ideas (who left, in their argument, all Russia east of the Volga in a kind of blank space), and the "Slavophiles," who held that Russia's true destiny was to develop by itself apart from the west, over which, by such development, it would eventually dominate. To these Westerners the memory of Peter became that of their first great leader, in effect the Father of their new Fatherland.<sup>1</sup>

The master of the Russian historians, Vasily Kliuchevsky, reminds us constantly that Peter had no such ideas in his earlier life—that he began his full self-sacrifice only when he



became aware of his mistakes. For those mistakes his people, Kliuchevsky points out, paid a grim price.

"Peter set himself to self education which in time revealed to him the vast blanks in his mental equipment, and turned his mind to such concepts, hitherto undreamed-of, as a state and the people of a state . . . and duty . . . and the obligations of a ruler."

That awareness seemed to come first at the age of twenty-seven, after the deaths of those who had taken responsibility during Peter's play years—his mother, the Patriarch Joachim, Gordon, Lefort—and after his return from the first European journey.

That early awareness of a responsibility, Kliuchevsky adds, did not stifle Peter's self-will. He did not as yet realize the political consequences of his actions, or understand how to cope with the psychology of the Russian people. (He realized much more by 1718, after the stagnation of the Northern War and the execution of his son. Full understanding seemed to come only in his last three years, when he had to contend with the efforts of his favorites to succeed to his authority.)

Kliuchevsky adds, blaming Leibnitz partially, that Peter failed because he held to the idea "that culture can be instilled into a nation in a greater measure because that nation is ignorant of culture . . . that the impossible was not the impossible, and that the life of a nation could be diverted at any time from its historical channel into an entirely different one.

"Peter turned his activity as a reformer entirely to measures needing to be imposed by force. . . . True, in himself Peter was sincere, as he was exacting of himself. But the unfortunate thing was that the bent of his endeavor made him a better manipulator of inanimate objects than a manager of human beings. He looked upon people as so many mechanical instruments. He knew how to use those instruments yet was powerless to understand their nature . . . even when they were his own home and family."

Regardless of the ideas of the nineteenth-century Westerners, Kliuchevsky and the more solid Russian historians point out that Peter did not invent the service state, nor did he manage to alter very much the Muscovite state that had existed

before him. What he did was to put it into western dress and propel it violently toward Europe by way of his city and the Baltic. The great changes came as the effect of that thrust; Muscovy ceased to be Muscovy and became the Russian Empire. The court of Catherine the Great was hardly Russian in a true sense, and certainly not as Peter had been.<sup>2</sup>

That artificial cleavage between the Russia-facing-west at St. Petersburg, and the true Russia<sup>3</sup> spanning the continent to the east crept into nineteenth-century geography, where maps depicted a Russia in Europe and an Asiatic Russia. For a while a stone stood as a frontier marker in the Urals. It has been taken down now.

With the Russian Revolution beginning in 1917, Peter's memory suffered some drastic changes.

Ignored at first with other tsars as a figure of a dead past, he revived very quickly and rather unexpectedly. The Marxian interpretation of history had castigated the tsars as instruments of capitalism. Under Lenin a different idea took hold—that the earlier tsars had been, in their way, leaders of national development, especially in the case of Ivan IV and Peter I.

These different concepts clashed furiously during the Trotsky schism. Apparently the concept of such tsars as instruments of an imperialistic Russia was relegated to Trotsky (although his own writings hardly bear this out), while Ivan and Peter, as creators of a Russian nation, belonged to the Lenin side. In any case, Peter emerged (about 1937) from this political storm as a forerunner of Leninism and (subsequently) Stalinism. So the Central Committee held.

At the same time attention was directed backward to the earlier history of the nation, especially to figures like Alexander Nevsky, the leader of the resistance against the Teutonic Knights (who were looked upon as the spearhead of German eastward expansion). Russian operas like Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* were sponsored again, with certain rewording. "Our Orthodox Sovereign Tsar" became, for instance, "Our beloved native land."<sup>4</sup>

Yet in Peter's case historical writers were warned by the Moscow authority not to emphasize the revolt of the Streltsi

as a popular rebellion against a tsar—that revolt, it seemed, was to be due to reactionary influence against the measures of Peter.

During the last war emphasis continued to be laid on the “national” interpretation of history, especially upon Russian leaders who opposed the Germans in the past, and those who defeated Napoleon. Peter seems to have remained firmly in place among the creators of the nation, with emphasis on his fellowship with ordinary people, his jesting at the “reactionary nobility”—the cutting off of beards, etc.—and his mobilization of the army of Poltava. Primarily, his role became that of the soldier who organized a defense of the land.

What will happen to his memory now (1948) that emphasis is centered upon the degeneracy of western culture, and upon western capitalism as an exploiter of ordinary human beings, remains to be seen.

It is odd that one of the most honest and unpretentious of human beings should have been interpreted in so many different ways after his death.

Apart from political ideology—and apart from Moscow also—a new examination of Russian history is being made. The great prerevolutionary historians, Solov'ev and Kliuchevsky, centered their attention on the development of Russia west of the Urals. Miliukov has done likewise. The land beyond the Urals remained for them a kind of limbo into which people disappeared and out of which things arrived. (Only in the last century has the eastern area been fairly attacked by historians; until then most of the groundwork was done by amateurs. Fine work was accomplished by Russian expeditions in exploring Siberia, and in examining its ethnology, with its flora and fauna. The materials of history were neglected, except by a few foreigners.)

Very recently historians like P. N. Savitsky and George Vernadsky have been examining the stubborn fact that Russia actually extends through Asia. It does not end in a void at the Urals. They look at Eurasia as a whole, and find that the domain once conquered by the Mongols of Genghis Khan, and ruled thereafter by the tsarist Russian Empire, is actually

a historic-geographic entity. That entity is the one ruled by the U.S.S.R.—by the Moscow of today.

The Mongols and the tsars after them were not greatly concerned with the ideology of a central government; they had to face the problem of the physical barriers of a continent populated with varied and restless peoples. The Mongols met that problem by abandoning their central control at Karakorum and dividing the continent into separate khanates—that of Batu Khan in Russia separating itself very quickly from the Chinese khanate of Kubilai. The early Muscovite tsars met the same problem by doing nothing about the eastern portion of the domain—except to draw from it some resources. That land and its varied people have, in turn, become the latent force shaping the development of the Russian state. They will continue so to influence it, unless the Moscow of today can establish a rigid control over the Eurasian continent.

The historians of this latest school of study have been called “the Eurasians.” They believe that the course of Russian history must follow the line of this place-development rather than the convolutions of the political center, which has changed leaders and beliefs so often without changing Russia as a whole.

The Eurasian historians are pioneering new ground. Their study may give more weight to Peter’s plans for the east in his last years,<sup>5</sup> and less weight to his experimentation with the ideas of the west.

In time he will be judged by his acts, as they affected his people as a whole.

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Use has been made chiefly of the following texts:

### *Narratives of the late seventeenth century*

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## FOOTNOTES

### *I The Two Gates of Muscovy*

<sup>1</sup>Dezhnev apparently never claimed or received a reward for his exploration. When he visited Moscow twenty years afterward, in 1671, little attention was paid him, apparently, by the Siberian Bureau. The only man then in Moscow who would have known the truth of his accomplishment was the son of Michael Staduchin, his enemy. His report was not unearthed from the Yakutsk files until Müller discovered it in 1736.

For a long time no one else managed to round the end of the continent at East Cape, now known as Cape Dezhnev. The cossack himself explained that the way was usually closed by ice. All this led to the story that the cape was impassable, and other voyagers started the tale of an impassable mountain chain that stretched from Asia to America, which in turn became confused with the report of a mythical "land of Yezo" between the continents. Thus Peter the Great did not know for certain whether Asia was joined to America or not, and launched his expedition in 1725 to search by sea for the end of Siberia which Dezhnev had rounded long before.

<sup>2</sup>The Moscow government had created a class of pioneers, usually experienced colonists liable to combat duty, and called "cossacks." These are not to be confused with the still independent Cossack Hosts, of the Don, Dnieper, and elsewhere. In fact actual Cossacks of those southern communities, who found their way to Siberia and enlisted, resented the government classification. At least once they petitioned to be called "men of service" or something different from "cossack."

<sup>3</sup>Native hunters had not killed off the animals in such wholesale fashion. Too often an *artel* or band of Russian hunters would make every effort to kill off the valuable animals of an area before another band or a government inspector could catch up with them. They would also loot all pelts from native villages. Then they would move

on to winter quarters in untouched territory. The best pelts of course could be obtained in winter in the coldest taiga areas where animals had the thickest fur.

The black fox with its luxuriant long coat was the greatest prize of all. One fine pelt brought the price of "forty acres," a team of horses, a herd of cattle, tools, and seed grain—a good living for a Muscovite family of that day. White furs, of the Arctic fox and ermine, were also valuable, while the thick-coated marten and gray squirrel were sought after. Men spoke of good territory "where the sables and foxes were darkest."

Easterners said, "Not only men but animals fled away at the coming of the *Urouss*."

<sup>4</sup>Lantzeff (*Siberia in the Seventeenth Century*) sums up this first effort of Moscow at colonial administration in the east: "The whole system lacked cohesion, and was marred by corrupt practices and oppression. It seemed, however, to satisfy the needs of the Muscovite state at its particular stage of development at that time."

The system did operate to meet the needs of Moscow rather than of Siberia itself.

<sup>5</sup>An account of the first epidemic of revolts, starting with the rioting in Moscow itself and the uprising in the Ukraine under Khmielnitsky, is given in *The March of Muscovy: Ivan the Terrible and the Growth of the Russian Empire, 1400-1648*.

The second series of revolts seemed to start with the trouble over the debased currency resulting in the "copper rebellion" in the Moscow area, and spreading to the Volga where Stenka Razin headed the resistance movement. These uprisings are sometimes described too loosely as class wars. Although they did react against the landowning class, in one way or another they fought against either the power or the methods of Muscovite officialdom. Usually the native peoples like the Bashkirs and Mordvas joined the resistance, and often as in the case of Khmielnitsky or Stenka Razin their objective was to set up an independent state along the frontier.

Actually they were, as George Vernadsky and B. H. Sumner point out, the fight of the frontiers against the expanding center.

That fight spread to the eastern frontier. Stenka Razin had hardly been executed before Siberia broke out, in the 1670s. Men at that time spoke of Chernigovsky's settlement on the Amur as "another Don"—that is, as a sanctuary like the rudimentary republic on the river Don.

<sup>6</sup>The *Raskolniki* or Separatists are usually known as Old Believers. Some account of them, and of the Siberian exile of their leader, the Archpriest Avvakum, is given in *The March of Muscovy: Ivan the Terrible and the Growth of the Russian Empire, 1400-1648*.

## II The Young Westerners

<sup>1</sup>Golovin was criticized later in Moscow for having surrendered the zone of the far east to the Chinese. But it is hard to see how he could have accomplished more than he did. He drew a frontier line and established relations between the two empires.

Recent Soviet writings for popular reading speak of the Amur as sought by the "ambition" of K'ang hsi, and obtained by the duplicity of the Jesuit, Father Gerbillon. Yet the Amur basin had always been peopled by Manchu and Mongol racial segments. The Russians were the intruders. As for Gerbillon, his interest undoubtedly lay with the Manchu ambassadors, who were adamant in their determination to keep the Amur basin. The evidence shows that Gerbillon worked conscientiously to arrive at a settlement, and that the treaty probably could not have been drawn without his efforts.

Nerchinsk lies some hundred and fifty miles east of Chita on the Trans-Siberian Railroad today, well north of the recent frontiers of Outer Mongolia and Manchuria.

<sup>2</sup>De la Neuville says of this army—"although formidable in numbers, it was only a multitude of peasants, poor soldiers and little experienced." He adds that Galitzin departed unwillingly on the expedition. There was a strong feeling in the Moscow council and among the great merchants that the Russian army should follow after the retreating Turks and penetrate the Ukraine, if not to the Danube. Moreover the understanding with Poland called for such a move, to relieve Turkish pressure along the Carpathians.

<sup>3</sup>Hollanders were only beginning to develop the *schooning* design that became the handy schooners later. But they and the English had done much with the fore-and-aft rig in small craft while the Muscovites had remained content for the most part with the ancient square rig on their river craft.

The legend that the finding of this English boat inspired Peter Romanov to foster Russian shipbuilding is a latter-day invention. The chief Russian rivers were alive with small craft; the Don Cossacks explored into the Black Sea with their sailing *saicks*; Stenka Razin had occupied the Caspian with a fleet of thirty or more sailing vessels a generation before, when Ordin Nastchokin had ordered the first sea-going brig to be built on the Oka-Volga waterway. Kliuchevsky believes that the ship models Peter got from the Arsenal were those made for that earlier brig.

What interested Peter in the "English boat" was its new design. He showed the same interest in a new model of an astrolabe, a grenade thrower, or a magnifying glass.

<sup>4</sup>As a campaign this accomplished little beyond justifying Peter's effort with his new soldiery. The Don and Dnieper Cossacks by themselves had captured Azov in 1637 and had held it for four years against one of the strongest of the Turko-Tatar armies. They had been forced to abandon Azov by pressure from Moscow which feared to antagonize the Turks at that time. Peter had used the main Muscovite field army to recapture a Turkish outpost.

Strategically, however, Azov was important because while it was the key to the Don River it also gave an outlet upon the Black Sea, still a Turkish lake. Psychologically, the capture had great effect upon the Muscovites, and Europeans.

### *III The Tour of Europe and the Invasion*

<sup>1</sup>Peter had a way of pretending to be deaf when he was not addressed as "Master Peter" or as "Carpenter of Saardam." He may have said once that he was only a student in search of a master, which was not his case at all. Out of such anecdotes Voltaire rationalized three generations later a young monarch who devoted himself to handicrafts until at Saardam he learned to build a ship entire with his own hands, isolating himself the while in humble solitude. Thus he saw in Peter the "heroic apprentice" of later legendry. Upon this was superimposed the concept of a monarch studying day and night to advance his people in science, and upon this in turn came the concept of a man aware of his own future, which grew into the idea of the "Great Reformer" of the nineteenth-century writers of western Europe.

Kliuchevsky, the foremost of the Russian historians, reminds us, "From his first foreign tour he derived no actual ideas for schemes of reform, but only some cultural impressions, a fancy to transplant to Russia a proportion of the things beheld abroad, and a project of declaring war upon Sweden. . . . Only during the last decade of his fifty-three years was it borne in upon him that he had done anything new. . . . And that tardy realisation of what he had done was no more than a mental reflex . . . an awareness of what had been accomplished."

<sup>2</sup>Johann Korb's journal was published speedily at Vienna, in 1700, under the title of *Diarium itineris Moscoviam*. As the title goes on to say, it was an account of the embassy of Baron de Guarient, whom Korb served as secretary.

Peter's satanic revels, held almost daily at the time of the torture-deaths of the Streltsi, appeared to young Korb only as notable incidents in Moscow. Korb was in no way critical of Peter, except that he complains of the silver plate at the banquets never being washed.

However the Russian embassy at Vienna took immediate exception to the volume. Guarient was never allowed to return to Moscow. After much friction, the Emperor Leopold agreed to order the remaining copies of Korb's work to be destroyed. The Russians bought up others, until only ten or twelve survived, in state libraries for the most part. (A Russian translation was made for Peter, but is not believed to be a good one. Another was published in 1906.)

A Scottish wanderer came across a copy in Italy and made an English translation which was published in a small edition in 1863. There are, or were, copies in the British Museum, Bibliothèque Nationale, and the Library of Congress.

Peter is said to have had one copy burned publicly at Moscow.

"It is often pointed out that Charles made a mistake in not following the Russians on to Moscow, which he could have captured at that time. But Charles was inexperienced, the main theater of the war lay behind him in Poland. At that time and place he had good reasons for not turning his back on Poland and plunging into the Russian forests.

He underestimated the potentialities of the Russians, yet hardly anticipated that he would be kept for five years, as Peter put it, "stuck in the mud of Poland."

"The surrender of the Swedish cavalry at the Dnieper. The question arises, how did Menshikov, a civilian, manage to lead armies? He had luck, because he took chances that won for him. Actually at Poltava he neglected to pursue the Swedes for twenty-four hours, being too occupied in systematic looting of their camp. When he was told to start the pursuit he took too few Russian cavalry, and stumbled on the once dreaded Swedish cavalry at the Dnieper, which they were unable to cross. Instead of retreating or maneuvering for battle, Menshikov simply rode up to them and demanded their surrender, which he got from Löwenhaupt, who knew that his survivors had no resistance left in them, and assumed that Menshikov must be leading the advance of the main Russian forces.

So at Baturin, Mazeppa's fortified base. It was well garrisoned to stand a siege. Menshikov simply threw his troops at the town headlong as they came up, and carried the place in a day with great loss on both sides. But after Poltava Peter removed Menshikov from direct command in the army and set him to governing Petersburg.

It was the heroic endurance of the Russian troops, not leadership, that won such victories as Poltava. Exactly fifty years afterward that same courage and endurance of Russian soldiers entrenched in the sandhills of Kunersdorf broke the iron determination of Frederick the Great, who watched the Russians stand their ground after forty-eight per cent of his own Prussians had been casualties.

On the whole Peter fared better with his military commanders than with his civil ministers. His most irretrievable mistake was to make his favorites his ministers, and not vice versa.

In fact Peter indulged in another vagary that has defied all reasoned explanation since his time. Persistently from first to last he bestowed high rank on his favorites in reverse to their abilities. Passing over the odd ranks he gave himself, and the play titles of the Pressburg group and the mock titles of the All-Drunken Council, we find him appointing François Lefort his first admiral. Lefort of course knew nothing about ships. Gordon, a moderately experienced soldier, also became an admiral.

If we dismiss these early appointments as Falstaff fancies, we find Golovin, an average diplomat, named commander in chief during the Great Northern War. In the crisis of the war Menshikov, an adventurer, became the first field commander. Apraksin, the high admiral of the Baltic, had never been to sea. Yaghuzinsky, a natural policeman, became Oberprocurator of the Senate, and Devier, a seaman, was named chief of police.

If there was a method in this madness, no one has been able to point it out. Peter, in this perversity, may have been imitating something, but what? Perhaps in his blindness he felt convinced that men who ministered to his own needs could minister to the state.

Oddly enough, Catherine II did much the same. Potemkin, her great favorite, was no soldier. Yet she made him commander in chief of all the Russian armed forces. The result was a terrible toll of casualties and sickness.

"Some nineteenth-century Swedish historians explain the disaster to Swedish arms by overemphasizing Mazeppa's importance—by assuming that Charles expected to be joined by a powerful Cossack army that never materialized under Mazeppa.

But when Charles turned south at Moghilev on the upper Dnieper (August 1708), Mazeppa had made him no offer of a Cossack army, nor had the Swedish command at that point need of men as much as supplies. Curiously enough, Pushkin and others have pictured Mazeppa as being deceived by Charles—as expecting strength where the Cossack found actual weakness.

The Swedish army did not actually invade what was Russia then. It moved south into the Ukraine to supply itself, and to operate in the area of the revolt (in which Mazeppa had not participated) rather than in the snowbound northern forests on the direct road to Moscow. Depots of food and munitions existed at Veroneth, at Kiev and—on a smaller scale—at Baturin and the Siech. But the Russian army kept the Swedes from Veroneth; Kiev—it seems—would have resisted them, and the Cossack bases were destroyed by the Russians.

Mazeppa did not join Charles until the Swedes had entered the steppe. His desertion had almost no influence upon events, except to

make his name a byword in the Ukraine. It became an epithet like "heretic" or "Antichrist." After the first World War I mentioned to Cossacks of the Taganrog region that I might write sketches of the Ukrainian hetmans from Khmielnitsky to Pugachev. "But not Mazeppa!" they insisted.

"Russian accounts of the campaign on the Pruth usually exaggerate the strength of the Turks. The traditional account puts that strength at a round 200,000 men, 300 cannon. The historians Kliuchevsky and Rambaud speak of forces "five and six times" the Russian strength. Turkish sources are almost as vague as the Russian about the realities of this fantastic campaign. The best estimate from Turkish sources is that the mobilization at Adrianople consisted of 50,000, to which the Krim Tatar contingent should be added.

Peter's command, on the other hand, was much more numerous than the "small detachment" sometimes spoken of. At the start it consisted of from 32,000 to 38,000 regular troops, with an undisclosed number of irregulars and servants. Apparently Peter had some 40,000 with him when he crossed the Dniester. After that his losses appear to have been constant and heavy. He had perhaps 23,000 to 24,000 men with him at the capitulation on the Pruth.

"He was at no time a man sparing of human lives and material resources, he redoubled his expenditure of both; but the real result of the affair on the Pruth was to call a full half-century's halt to Russia's naval progress on the Black Sea." . . . V. O. Kliuchevsky, *History of Russia*, Vol. IV, "The Northern War."

A clear picture of the desolate state of Peter's first navy is given (1710) by Charles, Lord Whitworth, who made a careful survey of the southern rivers in his capacity of envoy of the English court. Many of the warships, he reports, were used as salt carriers. At Kazan—"forty frigates of eight to fourteen guns . . . lie rotting on the shore." On the Don—"thirty-six sail of Dutch designed ships of from 80 to 30 guns . . . rotten and planked only on the outside to keep them above water for a show." At Veroneth he found the channel silted, the ways destroyed by floods, and malaria raging among the remaining laborers. The work here had cost the lives of three or four thousand men. At Stupena above Veroneth, eleven frigates built of green timber had rotted before they were finished.

Of the three great canals laid down by Peter, Whitworth found work suspended at the Don-Volga, and unfinished on the eight-mile waterway between the Don and the Tula munitions works. Only the canal from the upper Volga to the north, along the Volkhov to Petersburg, was finished.

At Petersburg itself, there were twelve frigates, eight galleys, six fire ships. "Of the frigates only three are in a condition of service."

# IV Rise of the Makers of the Reign

<sup>1</sup>Translation by Professor Oliver Elton, in *Verse from Pushkin*.

<sup>2</sup>"Before Poltava we find only two acts of a constructive tendency . . . a *ukaz* on local government of 1699, and a *ukaz* on the redivision of the Empire into provinces, 1708." Kliuchevsky, Vol. IV, "The Effect of the War."

<sup>3</sup>There was of course no question now of one of the great boyar families being called to the throne, as had happened during the Time of Troubles, a century before—in fact the Romanovs had been such a family, in exile.

For the time being, Peter's own personality had effaced any representatives of the lineage of Rurik, or Ivan Grodzniy. Romodanovsky, prince of an illustrious family, might easily have won Moscow's allegiance to himself at the time of the Streltsi revolt. But his loyalty to Peter was unswerving—and besides he had appeared too often in the guise of the mock King of Pressburg to be taken seriously now. Sheremet'ev was worshiped by the army—and watched by Secret Affairs personnel. He was a man without personal ambition, entirely devoted to Peter—signing himself "The poorest of your slaves."

<sup>4</sup>A Swedish observer believed that "his father had been the chief cause of the bad education of this prince."

Peter, according to this officer—one of the numerous prisoners of war—should have known Menshikov's origin and qualities too well to have entrusted Alexis' upbringing to him. Menshikov, on the rare occasions when he saw Alexis, spoke to him in "hard and filthy" terms—addressing the boy as "thou."

"This shamed and discouraged the prince, until he finally lost all desire to stand up for himself or keep on with his studies. Alexis was obliged to live continually at Preobrazensky, where he had only the companionship of common folk and priests. . . .

"His father made it a rule never to speak to him gently, and to meet him as indifferently as if he had been a stranger. This intimidated Alexis until he sought for excuses to avoid his father." Philip Johan Stralenberg, *Description Historique de l'Empire Russien*, Amsterdam, 1757.

<sup>5</sup>There was much truth in this. From the first the court at Vienna had been badly puzzled by the problem of what to do with the fugitive heir to the throne of Russia. Tolstoy had managed to lift the problem to the issue of war or peace with Moscow. Powerful Russian armies



still operated in Poland, and in consequence threatened the frontier of the empire in Silesia. No doubt the officials in Naples as well as in Vienna itself were relieved when Alexis departed without further disturbance. Charles, however, did not share their conviction that all was turning out for the best.

<sup>6</sup>*Divan* of Jallal-addin Rumi.

<sup>7</sup>Kliuchevsky sums up the continuation of the Northern War from Poltava as "the prolongation of a ruinous nine years' conflict for twelve years more. In the end it compelled Peter to jettison much of his own work, and to consent to help his antagonist not only to recover the German provinces which he himself had been the prime cause of that antagonist losing, but also to drive from the Polish throne the friend who he had . . . supported. And on Charles' death . . . fortune still further mocked Peter, for on that the Swedes concluded peace with his allies but not with himself, and thenceforth he had to confront his adversary alone."

<sup>8</sup>In advancing into the west the Russian armies aroused fear among the smaller maritime states—the Benelux group of that century—by their nature as well as their presence.

Until then even the aggressive armies of Charles had been of the time-honored monarchical pattern, waging limited war for limited objectives—for certain supply depots, fortresses, ports, or forests. Such western monarchs waged such wars by obtaining grants of money from their parliaments and conscripting a portion of the peasantry (or hiring regiments). In return for granting the war money the parliaments exacted privileges for themselves or managed to limit the authority of the king in some new point.

The Russian armies appeared to the westerners to be something new and strange; they appeared in unlimited numbers, reinforced by Cossacks and Cheremiss Tatars; they were paid for with unlimited funds; they fed themselves often on the countryside; a tsar of unlimited authority commanded them. Worst of all, this tsar fought for objectives not at all clear to western minds and apparently obscure in his own.

It was actually the semblance of total war, more than the conduct of the Russian armies, that startled the small western states.

In the diplomatic struggle, Peter had plunged into the partitioning of the degenerating Polish and Swedish dominions—one of the blackest chapters of European history. By marrying his nieces into tiny feudal states near Denmark, the key to the ocean outlet of the Baltic, he had become the neighbor of Hanover, whose elector had become King of England as George I. His massive fleet at Petersburg cut off supplies of timber and hemp (needed by the Anglo-Dutch navies). At one

point only Kuragin's skill kept England from declaring war on Denmark. The situation in the Baltic remained chaotic for generations.

<sup>9</sup>A legend grew up around the execution of the girl. According to the later tale, Peter stood by the block, picked up the severed head, raised it, kissed its lips, and then lectured the spectators upon its anatomy.

Peter might have done so. Yet the legend has all the markings of a latter-day tale about Peter—i.e., that he had loved Mary Hamilton passionately (he was actually obsessed with *Maria* Kantemir at the time). His actual habit of lecturing crowds about technical matters, his real interest in anatomy, and the actual preservation of the severed head as either a specimen or remembrance would account for the rest of the legend.

In any case, Mary's execution was the origin of the Scottish ballad, "The Queen's Marie."

In similar fashion a quite different legend grew up around the small English sloop of Peter's boyhood on the Yauza. He had it brought to Petersburg and placed on exhibition, and he may have said, "From this little grandfather, mighty grandchildren have grown"—meaning his huge new fleet. Whatever he did say, legend now relates that the finding of the ancient sloop in the Romanov lumberyard was the inspiration for launching Russians upon the seas.

<sup>10</sup>"The Russians destroyed 8 towns, 141 homes of the gentry, 1361 farms and 43 windmills. They destroyed 2 copper mines, 14 shops and 16 warehouses; they slaughtered 100,000 cattle, dumped into the sea 80,000 bars of iron, and in leaving, set fire to 80 leagues of forest land." (Depping's note to Levèsque.)

Different figures are given by other authorities, but the scope of the operation is not questioned. Some younger people and artificers of copper wire may have been carried back to Petersburg. This destruction of factories and ports seemed to go against the conscience of Apraksin and the foreign commanders but would not have attracted attention in the total warfare of modern times.

<sup>11</sup>This surrender of territory by Sweden in 1721 almost matches that of Finland to the Soviets in 1940. The shore of Lake Ladoga, the Karelian isthmus, Viborg, Esthonia were approximately the same in both cases. The Livonia of Peter's conquest lay above the Dvina River and Riga, the eastern half of Latvia prior to 1940.

<sup>12</sup>The new system of the Swedish-type colleges changed the Muscovite-type bureaus more in appearance than in reality. Peter did not wish them to be managed by foreigners, and no Russian personnel had sufficient training to make the Swedish system work. "Men near at hand" were hard to find.

Kliuchevsky observes that Peter's innovations made less impression at the time upon the country than upon himself.

"He set himself to do what immediate circumstances demanded and troubled himself little about the future . . . without noticing that his every act was helping to change his environment. . . . Even from his first foreign tour he derived no concrete ideas for schemes of reform, but only some cultural impressions, a fancy to transplant to Russia things beheld abroad, and a project of declaring war on Sweden. . . . Only during the last decade of his fifty-three years was it borne in upon him that he had done anything new. And that tardy realisation of what he had done was no more than a mental reflex." Vol. IV, "Peter's Evolution."

### V *The Turning to the East*

Little documentary evidence of the Gagarin process remains in Russian archives. For various reasons at different times it was muted down. A popular account of Siberia (*The Conquest of Siberia: An Epic of Human Passions*, Yuri Semyonov, Berlin, 1937, London, 1944) describes only Gagarin's exploitation of wealth, which, it seems, attracted Peter's attention, and brought retribution upon Gagarin. But if that were all and if there were no conspiracy against the government, why was Colonel Bucholtz's column sent out? Why was Major Likarov of the Guards sent to examine Gagarin in Tobolsk? Exploitation of revenues and defalcation was endemic in Petersburg at the time, and Peter had just overlooked Menshikov's share in it. Why was Gagarin tortured "severely" seven times before he died?

Baron Stralenberg's account is that of an intelligent eyewitness, and it must stand unless disproved.

Baron Stralenberg's account of the objects brought in by the column brings up a riddle that has never been answered. Among the objects were "idols" and rolls of manuscripts and printing on glazed paper in Mongolian and other scripts. "The Tsar had some of these sent to different academies." (To be translated.) But, Stralenberg adds, it was reported falsely that these manuscripts had been found around Samarkand, and the Caspian Sea.

But Samarkand was the area where the original specimens of gold had been obtained by Gagarin. Did some narrator confuse the finds of Bucholtz with the gleanings of Gagarin?

A still stranger point follows. "In 1720 they sent, again, up the Irtish a Captain named Lycharow, who did not find any trace of gold sand. The only result of this expedition was that they ascertained the elevation of all places [mountain ranges?] along the Irtish." This "Captain Lycharow" must be the Major Likarov or Likharev who was sent to examine or to arrest Gagarin in Tobolsk in 1717. Was Peter

still intent on finding out if gold did exist along the Irtysh? Did Likarov go back, on his own account? Did Gagarin, under torture, confess that his samples had been obtained actually from Bokhara-Samarkand? Or did he swear to the end that there *had* been gold on the Irtysh? The riddle, like so many in Peter's reign, remains unanswered.

<sup>2</sup>John Bell of Antermomy visited this defense line formed out of the half-finished canal. "These lines are drawn from the Volga to the Don, being a deep ditch, about thirty feet broad, palisadoed on the top, with high wooden towers at certain distances on top, within sight of each other, well guarded. His Majesty erected them for the preventing of incursions by the Kuban Tatars."

Derbent, also known as "The Iron Gate," was the ancient fortress built where a spur of the Caucasus juts into the sea. Legend insisted that Alexander of Macedon had built its wall, which climbed a way up the mountainside and so blocked the road along the coast. But Alexander was never there. Unfortunately for Peter the small harbor of Derbent had been ruined by slides of stone and sandbanks, as Bell noticed. This contributed to the disaster to the supply fleet.

The army had required a month to advance from the Russian fort of Agrakhan to the first Persian frontier post at Derbent, a distance of one hundred miles. By then most of the Russian dragoons had lost their horses and the army was badly in need of the supplies on the convoy fleet commanded by Apraksin.

<sup>3</sup>The dust of which John Bell complains in his taciturn fashion was no ordinary dust but an acute hardship. That coast of the Caspian is swept by sandstorms. Peter himself seems to have discussed with the geographer Delisle these "whirlwinds" of the Caspian, akin to the black sandstorms of the Persian desert, called—as he repeated—by the Tatars *Karaboga*. (My own remembrance of that side of the Caspian is one of continuing gales and driving sand. The Russians who gave me a plane in July 1932 to fly down from Tiflis to Baku explained that a start would have to be made at early daylight because wind in the afternoon would prevent landing at Baku. As it was, reaching Baku before noon, we could hardly see the ground for the driving dust.)

## VI *Reaction of the Land against the City*

<sup>1</sup>The so-called will of Peter, which outlines a plan for further conquest of Europe, is now known to have been a later forgery, by French hands. It is important only because it was invoked by Napoleon in his explanations for the invasion of Russia.

<sup>24</sup>"He aimed at transforming tsarism into a European kind of absolute monarchy, and to a considerable extent he succeeded. Russia was never the same again. . . . He declared himself to be 'an absolute monarch who does not have to answer for any of his actions to anyone in the world; but he has power and authority for the purpose of governing his states and lands according to his will and wise decision, as a Christian sovereign.' This version of enlightened despotism, typically enough, appeared in Peter's new code for the army (1716)." B. H. Sumner, *Survey of Russian History*.

Perhaps Peter's greatest mistake was in ridiculing Russian religious belief without being able to substitute anything for it.

<sup>25</sup>The anonymous Englishman (in 1724) sums up the qualities of the Russian Baltic fleet in which he served so long, as follows: Few if any foreign ships could better them in sailing qualities, "if well manned." In combat performance, "if the Russian fleet is attacked in their own roads, lying at anchor in an advantageous posture, the water smooth and the [crew's] bodies well secured from small shot, and their commanders are men of resolution, then the common Russ . . . will make a handsome defense, ever a Russian masterpiece—being sure of the galleys in great numbers to assist them."

<sup>26</sup>"The prime factor impelling him . . . was the factor of war." Kliuchevsky.

The officious Leibnitz was constantly apologizing in his letters for disturbing this monarch engrossed by the cares of war. Later European historians often make the error of assuming that Peter could not effect reforms until the last four or two years of his life because all his efforts until then had been devoted to the wars. But Peter himself, or his advisers, began those same wars, and throughout all those long years he took plenty of time to travel and amuse himself. If the reform of his nation had influenced Peter from the beginning, would he have waited until he was exhausted and broken in health before undertaking anything seriously?

It seems to be true beyond question, as Kliuchevsky maintains, that Peter did not realize the consequences of his actions in warfare as in other things. Yet he did more than any other man of his time to shape the Europe of today.

<sup>27</sup>It is too often forgotten in following Peter's intense activity that a clear course for the reform of Russia and the shaping of her relations with her neighbors had been laid down in the years 1645-94—when Peter began to take some interest in affairs. His father Alexis had been a most sturdy champion of that reform.

Kliuchevsky says: "Tsar Alexis felt the attraction of the new movement, without breaking with the older system, and he was followed by Ordin-Nastchokin, Galitzin [the "Great" Galitzin] and others.

"The most important points in the political program, which they followed steadily, were:

"(1) Peace and alliance with Poland.

"(2) A struggle with Sweden for the eastern seaboard of the Baltic, as well as with Turkey and the Crimea for Southern Russia [the Ukraine].

"(3) Reorganization of the troops into a regular army.

"(4) Replacing the old complex taxes with a poll- and an agrarian-tax.

"(5) The development of foreign trade, and domestic manufactures.

"(6) Beginning self government in towns, with the aim of increasing production of artisans.

"(7) Emancipation of serfs from their lands.

"(8) Beginning of schools, to be general, religious and technical also.

"All this was to be done on foreign models and with the help of foreign guides. This is practically Peter's program, but one made before he entered on his activity. In that lies the true importance of the statesmen of the seventeenth century . . . in some respects they went further than he did." Kliuchevsky, Vol. III, "Tsar Alexis."

### *Afterword*

"Those who reinterpreted Peter as the all-knowing monarch aware of the destiny of his nation ran into serious trouble in explaining away the All-Drunken Council and such satanic revelries as the marriage of two aged fools made drunk, or the crosses fashioned out of long-stemmed pipes. Various explanations were offered: (a) that serious councils were held secretly under cover of such revelry, (b) that Peter engineered it deliberately to take notes of remarks let slip by his favorites and the diplomats when intoxicated, (c) that such sessions really employed a kind of code, to discuss plans—that the mock cardinals, for instance, represented certain enemies of the state, and the wine vintages certain preparations to be made. So the baffling correspondence between Peter and favorites like Romodanovsky or Menshikov was also said to be code—that terms like *Mine-Heart friend* had a deeper meaning.

Actually the object of the All-Drunken Council was to get drunk. Peter staged public spectacles enough for propaganda purposes. He found relaxation from strain in the private drinking sessions. He took notes slyly at all times.

So the interpreters of Peter as the gifted soldier explain that his insistence on fireworks was his method of accustoming his people to gunpowder. It is silly to argue that Peter would keep on doing that ten years after Poltava.

"In carrying out his reforms, Peter completely overlooked the national psychology. For this reason both his admirers and his enemies

regarded him as a man foreign to the Russian spirit. But with all his apparent opposition to Russian tradition and habits, Peter was a typical Russian." George Vernadsky, *History of Russia*.

"... the Russian people, for whom the touchstone was the Volga and the steppe, Asia not Europe." B. H. Sumner. *Survey of Russian History*.

"Anatole G. Mazour, *An Outline of Modern Russian Historiography*, University of California Press, 1939.

"Historians have marked out the rhythm of Russia's return to the east after a thrust toward the west. Usually this about-face toward the east started with migration of the people, but almost always it followed warfare (unsuccessful for the most part) along the rigid western front.

So in the time of Ivan IV, after truce in the west (1582) came the first mass movement across the Urals (1581-87). After Moscow's Time of Trouble with the western powers (1605-12) began the surge eastward across the continent (at its height, 1611-37). Under Alexis the "permanent" peace with Poland and Sweden (1686) preceded the movement toward the Crimea and toward the Amur, and Golovin's treaty with the Manchus (1684-89). After Peter's belated peace of Nystad, he turned immediately to the Caspian and planned trade and exploration through Turkestan toward India (1722-25).

After the Napoleonic wars in the west and the Congress of Vienna (1815) there followed, after an interval, the rapid expansion of the empire into the Caucasus, down through mid-Asia, and across the Amur into Manchuria.

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